



Placer County Health and Human Services Department

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Dear Placer County Health Care Provider:

Influenza season is soon underway, and the California Influenza Surveillance Program needs your help! In collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) works with clinicians throughout the state to conduct surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) in outpatients. These clinicians volunteer as sentinel providers and are an invaluable part of our influenza surveillance program. Sentinel providers help us assess the timing, location, and impact of influenza viruses, and also help to identify the influenza virus strains that are circulating in the community.

California physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants from any specialty are eligible to participate as California sentinel providers. Participating providers are asked to report on a weekly basis the number of patients with ILI by age group and the total number of patients seen for any reason. ILI is defined as (1) fever ($\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ or 37.8°C) and (2) cough and/or sore throat, in the absence of a known cause other than influenza. Reports are submitted to CDC by internet or fax. It takes most providers less than 30 minutes per week to compile and report their data.

Sentinel providers in Placer County are also encouraged to submit a subset of respiratory specimens to Placer County Public Health Laboratory for free influenza testing. Please note that this testing is for surveillance purposes (not diagnostic) and the results will be sent back to providers as soon as they are available.

The Placer County Public Health Laboratory will provide the following:

- Specimen collection kits and instruction on their use
- Pick up of specimens on a routine, weekly basis
- Laboratory testing results via mailed test reports.

In return for their participation, sentinel providers also receive routine updates on influenza activity occurring in California, individual test results for specimens submitted for testing, and subscriptions to the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* and *Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID)* journals, courtesy of CDC. California sentinel providers that report ILI data consistently are also offered rapid influenza test kits.

As a health care provider, you are at the front line of influenza epidemics. Please consider participating as a sentinel provider- the information you provide will help us better target influenza education, vaccine and prevention strategies. To enroll in the California Sentinel Provider Program, please send the included enrollment form to CDPH. They will contact you directly regarding data collection and electronic reporting.

For questions, information, and instructions regarding submission of respiratory specimens for surveillance testing, please contact the Placer County Public Health Lab at 530-889-7205 (ask to speak with the Microbiologist in the Virology section) or via email at phlab@placer.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. WaKabongo".

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