Placer County
Health and Human Services Department

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helping people, changing lives

Date: October 10, 2014

To: All Placer County Healthcare Facilities

From: Dr. Robert Oldham, Placer County Health Officer

Subject: **Influenza Vaccine for Health Care Workers during Influenza Season**

Each year influenza infection affects 5% to 15% of the US population, and leads to approximately 30,000 deaths, 3 million hospitalization days, and 30 million outpatient visits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a yearly influenza vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. Patients in our health care facilities are particularly vulnerable to influenza. Influenza vaccination is particularly important for Health Care Workers (HCWs) who may be at higher risk of exposure to the influenza virus and may then transmit the virus to patients and coworkers. Influenza vaccination of HCWs protects patients and HCWs alike, and reduces employee absenteeism during influenza season.

State law requires that general acute care hospitals and certain other employers offer influenza vaccinations to employees. If hospital employees decline vaccination, they are only required to sign a declination statement in lieu of vaccination. While compliance rates with these laws are high, actual HCW vaccination rates often are not and may be below that required to create effective immunity within the workforce to suppress the spread of infection.

Mandatory vaccination policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to greater than 90%. Our goals are to increase rates of influenza vaccination of HCWs, reduce employee absenteeism during influenza season, and reduce HCW to patient transmission of influenza thereby reducing influenza-related mortality and morbidity in Placer County. To that end, I ask for your cooperation with the following order:

Order

I, as Health Officer for the County of Placer, am requiring that each and every acute care hospital in Placer County implement a program requiring its health care workers (HCWs) to receive an annual influenza vaccination prior to the beginning of the designated influenza season, noted herein, while working in patient care areas within that health care facility. Healthcare facilities must implement a plan to prevent onsite HCWs affiliated with the facility who are unable or unwilling to receive influenza vaccination from contracting and transmitting the influenza virus to patients. Such a plan may include requiring unvaccinated workers to wear a mask during patient care activities for the duration of influenza season, reassigning work activities, or other actions appropriate to the individual facility.

Duration of Order

This order is ongoing and applies to each influenza season unless the order is rescinded. For purposes of this order, the influenza season is designated as December 1 to March 31 of the following year. In any given year, if influenza surveillance data demonstrate unusually early and/or late peaks in influenza activity, I may extend the period during which the program shall apply for that year.

Recommendation to All Other Facilities

I, as Health Officer for the County of Placer, am strongly recommending that all other healthcare facilities implement a program requiring their health care workers (HCWs) to receive an annual influenza vaccination prior to the beginning of the designated influenza season, noted herein. Furthermore, I am strongly recommending that healthcare facilities implement a plan to prevent any unvaccinated onsite healthcare workers affiliated with the facility from contracting and transmitting the influenza virus to patients. Such a plan may include requiring unvaccinated workers to wear a mask for the duration of influenza season, reassigning work activities, or other action appropriate to the individual facility.

Definition of Health Care Workers

For the purpose of this order, "health care workers" or "HCWs" are persons, paid or unpaid, working in health care settings who have direct patient contact or who work in patient care areas and include volunteers and physicians and providers on the facility's medical staff.

I appreciate your help and support in protecting the residents of Placer County. If you have any questions, please contact Placer County Public Health Department at (530) 889-7141.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Oldham MD

Robert L. Oldham, M.D., M.S.H.A.

Health Officer