

Date: October 31, 2019

To: Every Placer County Health Care Facility

From: Dr. Aimee Sisson, Placer County Health Officer

Subject: Influenza Vaccination or Masking for Health Care Workers during Influenza Season

Each year influenza infection affects 8% to 15% of the U.S. population and leads to approximately 50,000 deaths, over half a million hospitalizations, and 15 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 (California Health and Safety Code §1288.7 and CalOSHA §5199) requires that employers of HCWs offer influenza vaccinations to employees. If HCWs 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 the threshold 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, require that every health care facility (hospital, clinic, urgent care center, skilled nursing and other long-term care facility, physician's office, home health care and other similar health care setting) implements a program requiring 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. Health care facilities must implement a plan to prevent onsite HCWs 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 HCWs 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 November 1st of a given year to April 30th 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.

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 Division at (530) 889-7183.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aimee Sisson".

Aimee Sisson, MD, MPH, FACPM
Placer County Health Officer