



MARYLAND HEALTHCARE WORKERS INFLUENZA INITIATIVE

Newsletter

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HCW Vaccination Policies in the US

A recent article in the American Journal of Public Health examined the policy of requiring influenza vaccination for healthcare workers. It stated that annual influenza vaccination for health care workers has the potential to benefit health care professionals and their patients and families by reducing the transmission of influenza in the health care setting. Furthermore, staff vaccination programs are cost-effective for health care institutions because of reduced staff illness and absenteeism. Despite international recommendations and strong ethical arguments for annual influenza immunization for health care professionals, staff utilization of vaccination remains low. The article analyzed the ethical implications of a variety of efforts to increase vaccination rates, including mandatory influenza vaccination.

Healthcare facilities across the nation have begun to institute mandatory influenza vaccination policies. Below are two examples of mandatory influenza vaccination policies:

The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System – Baltimore, MD

The recently-revised *Prevention and Control of Respiratory Viruses* policy requires that all persons with direct patient contact or working in clinical areas who do not receive the influenza vaccine by December 20, 2008 wear a mask within 3 feet of a patient. The purpose of the requirement is to protect patients from staff potentially infected with influenza and to protect staff from patients

potentially infected. Persons infected with influenza can shed virus up to 24 hours before symptoms begin. Unit and clinical managers, residency and fellowship directors and physician leaders are responsible for enforcing this policy as they are responsible for enforcing other hospital policies. Non-compliant staff will be educated about the policy requirements. All staff receiving the influenza vaccine will be issued a green badge clip by Occupational Health.

Barnes Jewish Hospital - Saint Louis, MO

Barnes Jewish Hospital and their affiliates have announced a mandatory vaccination policy for all healthcare workers. A hospital press release states the center had 71% vaccination rate among employees in 2007, well above the national average. However, they wanted to do even more to protect their patients and each other from the flu by instituting a mandatory policy for all employees.

As a Registered Partner of the Maryland Healthcare Workers Influenza Initiative, your facility has demonstrated its commitment to protecting patients and staff from influenza. As the influenza vaccination season comes to a close, we encourage you to evaluate your facility's influenza vaccination policy and its effectiveness. Is there more you can do to increase healthcare worker vaccination rates in Maryland?

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Maryland Observes National Influenza Vaccination Week



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) designated December 8-14, 2008 as National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW). The initiative was created to highlight the importance of extended-season influenza vaccination and promote greater uptake of flu vaccine beyond November. This year, the Maryland Partnership for Prevention promoted extended-season influenza vaccinations by:

- ◆ Kicking off the annual MPP Gift of

Prevention campaign during NIVW, distributing through members nearly 10,000 "gift cards" encouraging extended season vaccinations;

- ◆ Airing a 30 second commercial on the following cable stations in Maryland: CNN, A&E, AMC, TLC, TVOne, ABC Family, E!, and Nickelodeon; and
- ◆ Providing two grants to members to support extended season flu activities.

FDA Supports Influenza Vaccination of Healthcare Workers

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently released a statement and video urging health care organizations to ensure that health care personnel have access to influenza vaccination programs. The statement reads, "Studies have shown that low vaccination rates among [health care personnel] contribute to influenza outbreaks in hospitals and other healthcare settings, needlessly putting patients at an increased risk of contracting influenza and suffering from its potential major complications".

To access the FDA's statement on health care worker influenza vaccination, go to: <http://www.fda.gov/cber/flu/fluhealthcare.htm>

To access the video of the statement, go to: <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/psn/transcript.cfm?show=81#4>

Help Track Health Care Worker Vaccination Rates

It is important that Registered Partners of the Maryland Healthcare Workers Influenza Initiative keep accurate records of the number of staff and volunteers immunized against influenza as well as those who decline vaccination. We rely on the data you submit through the initiative's Wrap-Up Survey to calculate vaccination rates and identify high-performing facilities. Precise reporting by Registered Partners is critical to determining vaccination rates of individual facilities and the entire state. Please develop a system to track the EXACT number of staff and volunteers that were immunized against the flu. We're counting on you!

Tracking Influenza Activity in Maryland

For Week 49 (Dec 1 - Dec 7, 2008), a total of 33 visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) were reported by 7 sentinel providers. The median percent of ILI visits in Maryland was 1.4%. This is below the state baseline of 3.6%.

By the end of week 49 (Dec 1 - Dec 7, 2008), a total of 419 participants had signed up for the Maryland Resident Influenza Tracking Survey Of the 419 residents who received the weekly survey,

272 (65%) responded to it. Among the respondents, 9(3.3%) reported flu-like symptoms. A total of 8 (3%) of the respondents reported getting their flu vaccine this week

DHMH continues to recruit participants for the Maryland Resident Influenza Tracking Survey and the Influenza Sentinel Providers. If you are interested in helping track flu activity in Maryland, please email flu@dnhm.state.md.us

Initiative Sponsors

Maryland Partnership for Prevention, Inc.

P.O. Box 702

Owings Mills, MD 21117

Phone: 410-902-4677

Fax: 410-902-7771

www.immunizemaryland.org

Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DHMH)

Center for Immunization

201 W Preston St., 3rd Fl

Phone: 410-767-6679

Fax: 410-333-5893

www.EDCP.org

(Immunization)