



Larry Meredith, Ph.D., Director

Matthew Willis, MD, MPH, Health Officer

December 28, 2012

TO: Long Term Care Facility Administrators, Medical, and Nursing Directors

RE: Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Healthcare Personnel

The 2012-2013 influenza season is upon us. As the recently appointed county Public Health Officer, I request your assistance to help minimize the spread of influenza to our most vulnerable population, the elderly, and to keep our healthcare worker population healthy.

Vaccination of healthcare workers reduces infection and absenteeism, prevents medical complications in their patients, and results in financial savings to healthcare institutions. The best way to prevent transmission of influenza to those persons we serve is to require vaccination of healthcare workers. There are now two laws in California requiring healthcare facilities to make flu vaccine available to all their employees. Those employees who refuse the vaccination must sign a written declination statement (CA Health & Safety Code §1288.7 effective January 1, 2007; and CA Code of Regulations §5199 Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard of Cal OSHA, effective September 1, 2010).

In accordance with the intent of these laws, and consistent with the powers of authority of the county Health Officer, I am strongly urging employers to require all unvaccinated healthcare workers, that, in addition to signing an influenza vaccine declination statement, a mask be worn while on duty during influenza season or be assigned to non-patient care areas. Mandatory vaccination or masking policies have been shown to increase influenza vaccine rates to >95%.

Healthcare personnel are defined by CDC as all persons, paid and unpaid, working in healthcare settings who have potential for exposure to patients or to infectious materials or contaminated surfaces. Surgical masks are sufficient for those healthcare personnel declining flu vaccine. Many institutions nationwide and in Marin are going even further and making flu vaccine a condition of employment - only allowing exceptions to vaccination for those meeting any of the recognized specific medical contraindications or religious circumstances.

We would like to know how many of our elderly population residing in long term care facilities are vaccinated. We'd also like vaccination data on healthcare personnel. Please complete the enclosed data query as soon as possible (no later than January 9, 2013) and return it to:

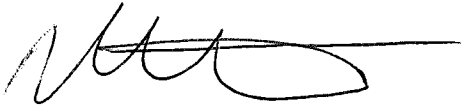
Dept of Health & Human Services – Communicable Disease Prevention & Control

899 Northgate Drive • Suite 104 • San Rafael, CA 94903 • Tel: 415.473.4163

Sharayn Forkel, RN, MS
Marin County Immunization Coordinator
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sforkel@marincounty.org

You may also contact Sharayn if you need any guidance with this reporting request, or with the implementation of a mandatory vaccination or masking policy. We thank you for your assistance in keeping Marin County the healthiest county in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Willis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Willis, MD, MPH
Public Health Officer
County of Marin