

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

# Public Health Services

*Healthy Future*

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Date: 26 August 2015

To: Health-Care Facilities Administrators and Staff

From: San Joaquin County Public Health Officer



Subject: Health Officer Order for **Influenza Vaccination or Masking** of All Health-Care Workers (HCW) during the flu season.

We can all minimize the harmful and costly impacts of the flu on us and our families, friends, co-workers, clients, patients, communities, and county. Flu season is generally during the fall and winter (November through March), with a peak in February, but can extend to other months. In the U.S., yearly flu infections are in the millions, related hospitalizations are more than 200,000, and related deaths have been as low as 3,000 and as high as 49,000. That equates to a lot of preventable misery, reduced productivity, and time lost from work.

The U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) recommend annual flu vaccination of all HCW. Many flu outbreaks linked to HCW have been documented in hospital wards and long-term care facilities. Conversely, high rates of HCW flu vaccination have been linked to improved patient outcomes, reduced absenteeism, and reduced flu infection among staff.

California state law (*Health & Safety Code §1288.7 / Cal OSHA §5199*) requires either flu vaccination or the signing of a declination statement for all acute care hospital workers and most health-care personnel, including clinic and office-based staff. Over the last several years, many county Health Officers in California (including San Joaquin County) have mandated that HCW receive an annual flu vaccine or use a mask during the flu season.

Thus, in accordance with our shared common goals of providing high-quality and safe patient care, I now mandate that all health-care facilities in San Joaquin County require their HCW who work in health care settings get flu vaccine or use a mask during the flu season.

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**Order:**

Pursuant to Health Officer authority under California Health & Safety Code §120175, I hereby order all health care facilities (hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, skilled nursing and other long-term care facilities, physician's offices, home healthcare and other similar health-care settings) in the county to adopt and implement policies and programs to require all HCW to receive the annual flu vaccine or to wear a face-mask during the flu season.

**Persons Covered:**

"Health care workers" (HCW) are all persons, including paid and unpaid employees, contractors, students, and volunteers, who work in settings where patient care or other service is provided within about six feet of a patient.

**Duration of Order:**

Unless and until rescinded, this Order applies during each influenza season, defined as 1 November of one year to 31 March of the following year. If surveillance data in a particular year demonstrate that the flu season is different than these dates, then this time period may be changed by a further order.

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We trust that all facilities subject to this Order will comply fully with it and will notify their HCW of its provisions. We hope that HCW in other facilities or settings not mentioned above will follow the strong recommendation that they voluntarily adopt the same protective policies and procedures.

Besides vaccination, highly important actions that we should all take throughout the year are:

1. When ill, stay home from work or school or other public spaces;
2. When you have to cough or sneeze, do so into your arm at the elbow;
3. Wash your hands often.

The role that you and other HCW play in preventing flu-related illness and death is invaluable. Please set a good leadership example by getting flu-vaccinated every year and help spread flu facts instead of the flu to your families, friends, co-workers, clients, patients, and communities.

For more information, you may access <http://www.flu.gov/>

To find where vaccine is available, you may access <http://flushot.healthmap.org/>

For state flu information: [http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Influenza\(Flu\).aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Influenza(Flu).aspx)

**Thank you** for everything you do every day to get and stay healthy and to improve everyone's lives in our communities and county.