



# SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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DIRECTOR

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HEALTH OFFICER

**PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

Date: 24 September 2014

To: Licensed Health-Care Facilities Administrators & Staff & EMS Providers

From: Anju Goel, MD, MPH, County Public Health Officer

Subject: Health Officer Order Mandating **Influenza Vaccination or Masking** of All Health-Care Workers (HCW) and EMS Providers during the Flu Season.

The annual flu season is nearly here and National Influenza Vaccination Week is on December 7-13, 2014. It's a good time to remember that we can all minimize the harmful and costly impacts of the flu by getting vaccinated. The CDC estimates that 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.

Many flu outbreaks linked to HCW have been documented in hospital wards and long-term care facilities. Conversely, high rates of vaccination of HCW have been linked to improved patient outcomes, reduced absenteeism, and reduced flu infection among staff. Therefore, the CDC and other national organizations recommend annual flu vaccination of all HCW. 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 other health-care personnel.

Over the last several years, many county Health Officers in California and across the country have mandated that HCW receive an annual flu vaccine or use a mask during the flu season. San Benito is amongst the counties with such a mandate, first issued in the 2013-14 flu season. As we have had a recent change in Health Officers, **I am issuing the Order again for the current and all future flu seasons and adding EMS providers to the Order.**

## Order:

Pursuant to Health Officer authority under California Health & Safety Code §120175, I hereby order all licensed health care facilities (hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing and other long-term care facilities) and EMS agencies in the county to adopt and implement policies and programs to require all HCW and EMS providers to receive the annual flu vaccine or to wear a surgical mask while working in patient care areas during the flu season.

**PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**  
439 Fourth Street  
Hollister, CA 95023  
831-637-5367

**MEDICAL THERAPY UNIT**  
761 South Street  
Hollister, CA 95023  
831-637-1989

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**  
1111 San Felipe Road, Ste 102  
Hollister, CA 95023  
831-636-4035

**HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS**  
439 Fourth Street  
Hollister, CA 95023  
831-637-5367

**EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**  
1111 San Felipe Road, Ste 102  
Hollister, CA 95023  
831-636-4066

**Persons Covered:**

“Health care workers” (HCW) are all persons, including paid and unpaid employees, contractors, students, and volunteers, who work in areas where patient care is provided in a licensed facility subject to this Order or who otherwise have direct contact with patients at such a facility.

“EMS Providers” are Certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), Licensed Paramedics, and other paid and unpaid employees, contractors, students and volunteers, who work in areas where patient care is provided in EMS agencies or who otherwise have direct contact with patients at EMS agencies.

**Duration of Order:**

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 period may be changed by a further order.

**Facilities Covered:**

“Licensed health care facility” includes any facility, place, or building licensed by the California Department of Public Health Licensing and Certification program that is organized, maintained, and operated for the diagnosis, care, prevention, and treatment of human illness, physical or mental, including convalescence and rehabilitation care and including care during and after pregnancy, or for any one or more of these purposes, for one or more persons.

San Benito County is committed to assisting facilities that are subject to this order. For more information, you may contact us at (831) 637-5367 or access the following websites:

1. National flu information: <http://www.flu.gov/>
2. Flu vaccine availability: <http://flushot.healthmap.org/>
3. 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 the lives of everyone in our county. Please set a good leadership example by getting flu-vaccinated every year and help spread flu facts instead of the flu.