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State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
California Department of Public Health



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
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TO: Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF)  
General Acute Care Hospitals (GACH)  
Acute Psychiatric Hospitals (APH)  
Specialty Hospitals (SH)  
Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF)  
Intermediate Care Facilities-Developmental Disabled (ICF/DD)  
Intermediate Care Facilities-Developmental Disabled-Habilitative (ICF/DD-H)  
Intermediate Care Facilities-Developmental Disabled-Nursing (ICF/DD-N)  
Correctional Treatment Centers (CTC)  
Congregate Living Health Facilities (CLHF)  
Department of Social Services

SUBJECT: **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION, DETECTION, AND CONTROL OF INFLUENZA IN CALIFORNIA LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES**

Enclosed are the *Recommendations for the Prevention, Detection, and Control of Influenza in California Long-Term Care Facilities*, revised for the 2007-2008 influenza season. While there are no major changes from the 2006-2007 recommendations, we continue to attempt to improve them. We would appreciate any feedback, particularly when the guide is used to manage an outbreak.

The influenza vaccine supply this year is anticipated to be sufficient. All healthcare workers should be vaccinated against influenza annually. This is particularly important in long-term care facilities, where the efficacy of influenza vaccination for elderly residents is reduced, and the primary protection against influenza is vaccination of staff. Facilities are strongly encouraged to provide vaccine to healthcare workers by using approaches that maximize immunization rates. *Please encourage your staff to get vaccinated against the flu and do all that you can to ensure that they do.* Many major organizations recommend that employers be required to offer annual healthcare worker influenza vaccination free of charge, and that employees be required to sign a declination form if they do not wish to be vaccinated. California Senate Bill 739 made this mandatory in acute care hospitals beginning July 2007, and a draft California

Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) regulation would make this mandatory in all healthcare facilities.

The California Adult Immunization Coalition consists of over 20 organizations committed to developing a long-term, strategic, and integrated effort to improve adult immunization rates for adults. One component of this effort is an initiative to immunize healthcare workers against influenza. Information and toolkits to assist acute care and long-term care healthcare facilities immunize healthcare workers are available at the California Adult Immunization Coalition website at: <http://immunizecaadults.org/>.

Influenza outbreaks occur during the winter months, and as a result, about 2,000 Californians die each year. Influenza is a particularly serious problem in nursing homes where residents are at high risk of developing serious complications or dying due to their age and health problems. Once influenza virus enters a nursing home, it can spread rapidly. During nursing home outbreaks more than half of the residents can become infected, and some require hospitalization or die.

California regulations require that any outbreak of illness in a healthcare facility be reported to both the local health department and the Department of Public Health Licensing and Certification district office. During outbreaks of respiratory illness, the Department of Public Health can provide assistance in: (1) laboratory testing to determine the cause (outbreaks of respiratory illness may be caused by pathogens other than influenza); (2) providing recommendations for measures to control the outbreak, and (3) determining the need for influenza antiviral medications and/or additional influenza vaccine.

The Department of Public Health encourages facility staff to review these advisory recommendations. Influenza vaccine is available for purchase from a number of providers; if you need help identifying a provider contact your local health department. Questions regarding outbreak control should be referred to your local health department. Written comments about the information contained in these recommendations should be mailed to Dr. Rosenberg, California Department of Public Health, Division of Communicable Disease Control, 850 Marina Bay Parkway, Richmond, CA 94804 or emailed to [jon.rosenberg@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:jon.rosenberg@cdph.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

**Original Signed by Kathleen Billingsley, R.N.**

Kathleen Billingsley, R.N.  
Deputy Director  
Center for Healthcare Quality

Enclosure