

# Amador County Public Health Department

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**DATE:** September 21, 2012

**TO:** Amador County Healthcare Workers

**FROM:** Bob Hartmann, M.D., Amador County Health Officer

## **RE: Mandatory Influenza Vaccination of All Healthcare Workers in Amador County**

As Public Health Officer of Amador County, I am requiring that all Amador County healthcare workers (HCWs) receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season when providing direct patient care within six feet of a patient.

Each year influenza infection affects 5 to 15% of the US population. Influenza results in over three million hospitalization days and 31 million outpatient visits yearly. Patients in our healthcare facilities are particularly vulnerable to influenza. Healthcare workers are both at risk for developing influenza and of transmitting the virus to their patients.

In your role as healthcare professionals and my role as Public Health Officer, we share the common goal of minimizing the spread of infectious disease. Influenza vaccination of HCWs protects patients and reduces employee absenteeism during influenza season. State law requires that general acute care hospitals and certain employers offer influenza vaccinations to employees. If hospital employees decline vaccination, they are only required to sign a declination statement in lieu of vaccination. While compliance rates with these laws are high, actual HCW vaccination rates are not. Rates may actually be less than required to create effective immunity within the workforce to suppress the spread of infection. Mandatory vaccination or masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to greater than 90%. In addition, pending legislation will require that all hospitals achieve an influenza vaccination rate of 90% by 2015.

Our goals are to increase rates of influenza vaccination of all HCWs, reduce employee absenteeism during influenza season, and reduce HCW transmission of influenza to patients, thereby reducing influenza-related mortality and morbidity in Amador County.

### **Order**

I, as the Public Health Officer of Amador County, am requiring Amador County healthcare workers receive an annual influenza vaccination by November 1 or, if they decline, wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season when providing direct patient care within six feet of a patient. Simple surgical masks will meet the requirement.

### **Duration of Order**

This order remains in effect from November through March for each successive annual influenza season unless otherwise modified, suspended or rescinded by the Amador County Health Officer. For the purposes of this order, the influenza season in California is defined as November 1 through March 31 of the following year. In any given year, if influenza surveillance data demonstrate an unusually late peak with continued widespread influenza activity into the Spring, an extension of this public health order may be necessary.

### **Definition of HCWs**

For the purposes of this order, "healthcare worker" is defined as a person, paid or unpaid, working in a healthcare setting who provides direct patient care within six feet of a patient.

I appreciate your cooperation, assistance, and support in protecting the residents of Amador County. If you have any questions, please contact Amador County Public Health Department at (209) 223-6407.