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CONTRA COSTA
HEALTH SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 27, 2012

TO: Hospitals, Ambulatory and Community Clinics, Skilled Nursing and other Long Term Care Facilities, and other Licensed Health Care Facilities

FROM: William B. Walker, M.D.
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Health Care Workers During Influenza Season

As Health Officer for Contra Costa County, **I am now issuing a Health Officer order mandating that all licensed health care facilities in Contra Costa County require their health care workers (HCWs) to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask during the influenza season while working in patient care areas.**

Influenza infection affects 5-15% of the US population every year, leading to an estimated 3.1 million days of hospitalization and 31.4 million outpatient visits. HCWs are both at risk for influenza and can transmit the virus to their patients and coworkers. Patients in our health care facilities are particularly vulnerable to influenza. Young children, the pregnant, the elderly, and those with chronic health conditions are at greater risk for influenza-related hospitalization and death.

In your role as a health care facility and mine as Health Officer, we share common goals: reduce spread of serious diseases such as influenza, provide outstanding health care, and protect our HCWs. State law requires that general acute care hospitals and certain employers offer influenza vaccinations to employees. If 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 and may be below the level that will reduce the spread of infection in our health care facilities. Mandatory vaccination or masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to above 95%.

Our goals are to protect both patients and HCWs from influenza disease, hospitalization and death by increasing rates of influenza vaccination of HCWs and reducing HCW-to-patient transmission of influenza and vice versa.

Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Health Care Workers During Influenza Season
August 27, 2012

Order

I, as the Health Officer of Contra Costa County, am requiring that each and every licensed health care facility in Contra Costa County implement a program requiring its health care workers to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season while working in patient care areas in that health care facility.

Duration of Order

This order is ongoing and applies to each influenza season unless the order is rescinded. The influenza season is defined as November 1 to March 31 of the following year. In any given year, if influenza surveillance data demonstrate an unusually late peak and continued widespread influenza activity in the spring, I may extend the period during which the masking program shall apply for that year.

Facilities Subject to the Order

This order applies to hospitals, ambulatory and community clinics, skilled nursing and other long term care facilities, dialysis centers and any other licensed health care facility.

Definition of HCWs

For the purposes of this order, "health care workers" or "HCWs" are persons, paid and unpaid, working in licensed health care settings who have direct patient contact or who work in patient care areas.

I appreciate your help and support in protecting the residents of Contra Costa County. For any additional questions, please contact our Contra Costa Health Services Public Health Division Communicable Disease Programs at 925-313-6740.

cc: Board of Supervisors
David Twa