

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY  
**Public Health Services**  
*Healthy Future*

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August 27, 2012

To: Acute Care Hospitals in San Joaquin County  
From: Karen Furst, MD, MPH, Health Officer   
Subject: Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Health Care Workers  
During Influenza Season

As a follow up to my memo of August 22, 2012, in order to have a consistent policy across all acute care hospitals in San Joaquin County, I am issuing a Health Officer order mandating that all acute care hospitals in San Joaquin 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 in patient care areas.

Influenza infections accounts for an estimated 36,000 excess deaths in the US each year. HCWs are both at risk for influenza and can transmit the virus to their vulnerable patients. Influenza vaccination of HCWs protects patients and reduces employee absenteeism during influenza season. State law requires that general acute care hospitals offer influenza vaccinations to employees (Cal. Health & Safety Code, §1288.7, subd. (a); 8 Cal. Code Regs., § 5199, subd. (c)(6)(D) and (h)(10)). If hospital employees decline vaccination, they are only required to sign a declination statement in lieu of vaccination (Cal. Health & Saf. Code, §1288.7, subd. (a); 8 Cal. Code Regs., § 5199, subd. (c)(6)(D) and (h)(10)). Mandatory vaccination with masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to >95%.

Therefore as the Health Officer of San Joaquin County, I am ordering that all acute care hospitals in San Joaquin County implement programs requiring their 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.

The influenza season is defined as November 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. If during this time the 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 the purposes of this order, "health care workers" are persons, paid and unpaid, working in health care settings who have direct patient contact or who work in patient care areas.

Thank you for your dedication to the health of your patients and your workforce, and for working with Public Health Services to make San Joaquin County a healthier community. Questions can be directed to me at 468-3411, or Ginger Wick, Program Manager, at 468-3822.