



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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TO: Stanislaus County Healthcare Employers

SUBJECT: Masking of Healthcare Personnel Who Decline Influenza Vaccination

Dear Colleague:

You are aware that both the California Health and Safety Code, and **Cal OSHA** regulations require healthcare workers to receive annual vaccination for seasonal influenza (see citations below). **In accordance with the intent of these laws, I am strongly urging employers to require healthcare workers who decline influenza vaccination to wear a surgical mask while providing direct patient care during the flu season.** I am also recommending that healthcare administrators adopt an easy way to identify the healthcare workers who have received their influenza vaccine. One example is to place a sticker on the healthcare worker's badge following vaccination.

We are four weeks into the 2011-12 influenza season. Vaccination of healthcare workers reduces infection and absenteeism among them, prevents mortality in their patients, and results in financial savings to health institutions. The best way to prevent transmission of a disease like influenza to those persons we serve is to mandate vaccination of healthcare workers. Those employees who refuse the vaccination must sign a written declination statement.

Many institutions nationwide and in California are going even further and making flu vaccine a condition of employment - - only allowing exceptions to vaccination for those meeting any of the recognized specific medical contraindications or religious circumstances. For a list of institutions, states, and federal mandates with this requirement, please see www.preventinfluenza.org.

Thank you for your collaboration to help reduce the adverse impact of influenza on our county.

Most Sincerely,

John A. Walker, M.D.

1. CA Health & Safety Code §1288.7 effective January 1, 2007
2. Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard of Cal OSHA, effective September 1, 2010 (8 Cal. Code Regulations § 5199).