



PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

To: Licensed Acute Care Hospitals, Skilled Nursing Facilities, Intermediate Care Facilities, Emergency Medical Services Provider Agencies and Other Healthcare Facilities in the City of Pasadena Public Health Jurisdiction

From: Parveen Kaur, MD *Parveen Kaur*
Interim Health Officer, City of Pasadena

Date: September 29, 2023

Re: Health Officer Order for Mandatory Annual Influenza Immunization Program for Health Care Personnel During the Respiratory Virus Season

As Health Officer of the City of Pasadena, I am issuing this updated Order mandating all licensed acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities, emergency medical services (EMS) provider agencies, and other healthcare facilities in the City of Pasadena implement a program by which Health Care Personnel (HCP) are to receive an annual influenza vaccination for the current season. HCP who decline to receive an influenza vaccine are required to sign a statement declining vaccination and wear a mask while working in patient care areas or in contact with patients. A mandatory influenza vaccination or masking order has been in effect in Pasadena since October 2013 and will be in effect for this and future respiratory virus seasons.

In fall 2022, there was a triple epidemic and increased hospitalizations due to spikes in cases of three (3) respiratory viruses that were circulating at the same time. Notably, these included SARS-CoV-2, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and influenza. With COVID-19 still circulating and increasing, we may see a triple epidemic again this fall. Therefore, we will be referring to the time period as the respiratory virus season, not simply influenza season.

Influenza, or flu, is a highly contagious respiratory illness that causes significant burden in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that flu has resulted in 9 million – 41 million illnesses, 140,000 – 710,000 hospitalizations and 12,000 – 52,000 deaths annually between 2010 and 2020 (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/index.html>). Influenza exists all year, but in the U.S., infection rates and severe illness increase in the winter months, known as “flu season.” Studies suggest that up to 25% of health care personnel are infected with influenza each season. Not only are unvaccinated HCP at risk for becoming infected with influenza, they can also transmit the virus to their coworkers and patients. Patients in health care facilities, as well as young children, pregnant women, elderly, and persons with underlying health conditions or disabilities, are particularly vulnerable to influenza infection and subsequent complications.

Healthcare-associated infections tend to be more severe than community acquired cases, and lead to increased hospital days and mortality for inpatients. Influenza vaccination of HCP protects patients as well as the vaccinated worker, and reduces employee absenteeism during influenza season. Influenza vaccination can also reduce the risk of co-infection with other respiratory viruses. Policies combining mandatory vaccination and masking have been shown to be highly effective in raising HCP vaccination rates. The CDC and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases conducted a panel survey of HCP and found that during the 2020 – 2021 influenza season, an employer’s vaccination requirement was the second most commonly reported reason for vaccination.

In addition to flu viruses, several other respiratory viruses also spread during flu season and can cause symptoms similar to those seen with flu infection. These respiratory viruses include rhinovirus (one cause of the “common cold”) and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), which is the most common cause of severe respiratory illness in young children as well as a leading cause of death from respiratory illness in those aged 65 years and older. Other commonly circulating respiratory viruses include human parainfluenza viruses (HPIV), human metapneumovirus (HMPV), respiratory adenoviruses and human coronavirus. With persistent community transmission of COVID-19, there is possible risk of additive COVID-19 and influenza winter surges as seen in the Southern Hemisphere. There is also the possibility of co-infection with both viruses, which may make illnesses more severe in high-risk individuals and the elderly. All HCP are required to wear masks per the [City of Pasadena Health Officer Order Requiring Wearing of Face Masks by Personnel, Patients, Clients, and Visitors in Health Care Settings](#).

California law requires acute care hospitals to offer free annual influenza vaccination on-site to their employees and to require all to be vaccinated; any employee who elects not to be vaccinated must provide the hospital with a written declaration that he or she has declined the vaccination [CA Health & Safety Code §1288.7(a)]. In addition, occupational safety regulations mandate that many types of health care facilities, including hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities, EMS provider agencies, and other healthcare facilities make seasonal influenza vaccine reasonably available to all employees with occupational exposure and ensure that each employee who refuses the vaccine signs a statement declining vaccination [CA Code of Regulations, title 8, § 5199 (c)(6)(D) & (h)(10)].

ORDER:

Pursuant to my authority under section 120175 of the California Health & Safety Code, for the purpose of limiting the spread of influenza, I hereby order all Health Care Personnel (HCP) in Health Care Facilities described in subdivision (a) below and in Home Care Settings under home care organizations described in subdivision (b), (“High-Risk Settings”) below receive an annual influenza vaccine for the current flu season. To the extent anything in this Order is inconsistent or conflicts with any previous Orders of the Health Officer, this Order shall control.

a. Health Care Facilities include:

- i. General Acute Care Hospitals
- ii. Skilled Nursing Facilities (including Subacute Facilities)
- iii. Intermediate Care Facilities
- iv. Acute Psychiatric Hospitals
- v. Adult Day Care Centers
- vi. Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) and PACE Centers

- vii. Ambulatory Surgery Centers
 - viii. Chemical Dependency Recovery Hospitals
 - ix. Clinics and Doctors' Offices (including behavioral health, surgical and dental)
 - x. Congregate Living Facilities
 - xi. Dialysis Centers
 - xii. Hospice Facilities
 - xiii. Pediatric Day Health and Respite Care Facilities
 - xiv. Residential Substance Use Treatment and Mental Health Treatment Facilities
- b. Home Care Settings include:
- i. Home Care Organization
 - ii. Home Health Agency

Persons Subject to Order

For the purposes of this Order, "Health Care Personnel" are all persons working in a prehospital setting or in areas where patient care is provided in a licensed health care facility subject to this Order, or who otherwise have direct patient contact at such a facility or prehospital setting. Personnel may include, but are not limited to, paid or unpaid employees, contractors, students, and volunteers.

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 April 30 of the following year. In any given year, if influenza surveillance data demonstrate that the influenza season is different than November 1 to April 30, this period may be changed by a further order.

Reporting

If requested by the Pasadena Public Health Department or the LA County EMS Agency, facilities/agencies must report their HCP influenza vaccination rates within the requested timeframe.

The Pasadena Public Health Department shares with health care facilities and professionals in the city the goal that our population receives safe and effective care. We trust that all facilities and EMS provider agencies subject to this Order will comply fully and will notify their HCP of its provisions.

For any additional questions please contact the Communicable Disease Program at (626) 744-6089 or visit the City of Pasadena Public Health Department website at <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/public-health/healthcare-providers/#health-order>.

- [Influenza Vaccination for Health Care Personnel FAQ](#)
- [Rationale for Mandated Influenza Immunization for Health Care Personnel](#)