

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Public Health Division

To: Santa Cruz County Licensed Healthcare Facilities

From: Gail Newel, MD, MPH
Santa Cruz County Health Officer

Date: September 14, 2021

Re: Order for Licensed Healthcare Facilities to Implement a Mandatory Influenza Prevention Program for Health Care Workers (HCWs)

Background Information

Flu activity was unusually low throughout 2020/2021 possibly due to COVID-19 mitigation measures such as wearing face masks, staying home, hand washing, school closures, reduced travel, physical distancing and increased ventilation in indoor settings. In addition to these measures, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that a record number of influenza vaccine doses were distributed in the U.S during 2020/2021, which also may have contributed to the reduced flu illness. As the economy and schools have reopened and many have resumed travel, it is more important this year to get an influenza vaccine, especially for HCWs. Influenza vaccination of HCWs protects medically fragile patients and reduces employee absenteeism during influenza season.

State law requires that acute care hospitals and certain employers offer influenza vaccinations to employees or have the employee sign a declination statement if they choose not to be vaccinated. While compliance to these existing laws is high, actual HCW vaccination rates are not and may be below that which will blunt the spread of infection in a health care setting. Mandatory vaccination with masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to above 90%.

My goal is to increase the rate of influenza vaccination of HCWs, reduce employee absenteeism, and protect Santa Cruz County residents from influenza infection. I believe you share these goals.



Public Health
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Therefore, I am issuing the following Health Officer Order:

Order:

I, as Health Officer of Santa Cruz County, am ordering that all licensed healthcare facilities and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers in Santa Cruz County implement a mandatory influenza vaccination program for the 2021-2022 influenza season. All the facility's HCWs must receive an annual influenza vaccine or, if they decline, wear a mask while providing direct patient care or working in patient care areas during the influenza season.

Duration of Order:

For the purposes of this order, the influenza season is defined as **October 31, 2021 to March 31, 2022**. If influenza surveillance data suggest widespread influenza activity late in the spring, this order may be extended.

Please note that this order will be reissued for the 2022-2023 influenza season.

Facilities Subject to the Order:

This order applies to all licensed healthcare facilities and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers in Santa Cruz County for the 2021-2022 influenza season.

For the purposes of this order, "licensed health care facility" shall be defined as any facility, place, or building licensed by the California Department of Public Health Licensing and Certification Branch.

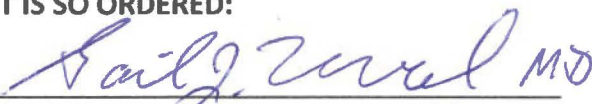
However, it is recommended that all facilities not explicitly mentioned above, require HCWs who provide direct patient care or who work in patient care areas to receive the annual influenza vaccine or mask.

Definition of HCW:

For the purposes of this order, HCWs are defined as any paid or unpaid person who has direct patient care or who works in patient care areas.

I appreciate your help and support in protecting the residents of Santa Cruz County. For any additional questions please contact the Communicable Disease Unit at (831) 454-4114.

IT IS SO ORDERED:



Gail Newel, MD
Health Officer of the County of Santa Cruz

9-13-2021
Date

Approve as to Form:



Office of the County Counsel