



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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PROVIDER HEALTH ADVISORY

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Mandatory Influenza and COVID-19 Vaccination of Health Care Workers in San Luis Obispo County

Each year, San Luis Obispo County suffers illness and death from influenza, especially among our most vulnerable populations: infants and small children, the elderly, and those with chronic illness. Thousands of young, otherwise healthy people die from flu each year in the US. Influenza also strains our health care system. Unfortunately, SLO County must now also grapple with continued illness, death, and health care system strain caused by COVID-19.

Health care workers (HCWs) are at risk for both influenza and COVID-19 and can transmit the infections to their colleagues and vulnerable patients. Vaccination of HCWs reduces infection and absenteeism in the workforce and may prevent mortality due to reduced transmission to patients.

The best way to attain our shared goal of preventing transmission of influenza and COVID-19, particularly in health care settings, is to mandate vaccination during the season in which respiratory illness typically peaks ("influenza season"). While COVID-19 does not yet have predictable seasonality, this is the season in which the combined burden of all respiratory diseases typically places the greatest strain on health care systems. Those who decline vaccination must wear adequate respiratory protection throughout the season.

Order:

Pursuant to Health Officer authority (CA Health & Safety Code §120175), I hereby order all health care facilities/organizations to adopt and implement a policy to require that all HCWs receive the annual influenza vaccine and remain up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccination (receive at least one dose of an updated 2023-24 COVID-19 vaccine) OR sign a written declination and wear a surgical mask or higher-level respirator (e.g., N95, KN95, KF94) with good fit while on duty during respiratory illness season.

Duration of Order

Unless and until rescinded, this Order applies during each influenza season, defined as November 1 to April 30 of the following year. If surveillance data in a particular year demonstrate that the peak season is different from these dates, this time period may be amended by a further order.

Facilities/Organizations Subject to Order

This Order applies to San Luis Obispo County hospitals, community clinics, physician offices, ambulatory care centers, long-term care facilities and emergency medical services providers.

Definition of HCWs

For this requirement, "health care workers" or "HCWs" are people, paid or unpaid, who work in indoor settings where (1) care is provided to patients, or (2) patients have access for any purpose.

I also recommend that health care administrators adopt an easy way to identify HCWs who have received their influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. One example of this type of identification is to place a sticker on the health care worker's badge following vaccination. Thank you for your hard work in making San Luis Obispo County a healthy community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Borenstein".

Penny Borenstein, MD, MPH
San Luis Obispo County Health Officer

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