



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

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HEATHER HOWARD
Commissioner

Guidance 09-CDS-01

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Heather Howard
Commissioner

SUBJECT: Immunization of Pupils in School

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance for all schools, preschools, or child care facilities concerning the requirement at N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.2 that a principal, director or other person in charge of a school, preschool, or child care facility shall not knowingly admit or retain any child whose parent or guardian has not submitted acceptable evidence of the child's immunization.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.22(d), the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Senior Services (the Department) determined that due to limited vaccine availability it is appropriate and reasonable to temporarily suspend for the 2009 - 2010 academic year the mandatory requirement for children six months through 59 months of age attending any child-care center or preschool facility to receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine.

This temporary suspension is based on delays in vaccine production with a resultant delay in delivery and supply shortage within New Jersey. The Department received multiple inquiries concerning influenza vaccine, difficulties in locating seasonal vaccine, and the requirements for evidence of immunization to admit or retain a child in a school, preschool, or child care facility. Furthermore, the CDC stated in a November 9, 2009, briefing that up to 114 million doses of seasonal flu vaccine may be produced this year but did not know the exact timetable for getting the doses. Because timing of influenza vaccine production and distribution is unpredictable, availability of the vaccine supply does not always coincide with peak demand. In New Jersey, influenza typically occurs any time between October through early April. However, the peak season of occurrence is during January and February.

Influenza is a highly infectious acute viral respiratory disease that annually causes moderate or severe illness to persons of all ages. The major complication of influenza is pneumonia. Children less than two years of age have comparable high rates of hospitalizations to those adults 65 years of age and older. Infants and preschool-aged children are considered to be among the most efficient incubators and transmitters of

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this disease to other susceptible healthy or high risk persons with certain medical conditions. The Department strongly recommends that all children six months through 59 months of age attending any child-care center or preschool facility receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine contingent on vaccine availability. The Department believes that widespread use of influenza vaccine among preschool-aged children will decrease the incidence of influenza among children and adults.

The principal, director or other person in charge of a school, preschool, or child care facility may request information to document compliance with the vaccine requirement and enter the information in an appropriate vaccine record. Individuals should be directed to the Department's website specifically the Find a Flu Shot Locator for vaccine clinics. In addition, the Department implemented a toll-free hotline (1-866-321-9571) operating every day to provide general information about vaccine availability information.

Earlier this week, in collaboration with the federal government, Google Inc. launched a flu shot finder to provide individuals with the locations of clinics that offer vaccines. This site can be accessed through the Department's website at <http://nj.gov/health/flu/h1n1.shtml>. It allows the public to search by town, county and zip code to find flu shots at locations such as major retail pharmacies and supermarkets. The site also includes the public health clinics that have been listed on the DHSS "Find a Flu Shot" button. The website can also be accessed at www.google.com/flushot.

The DHSS is also recommending that individuals contact their physician, community health center, local pharmacy, local or county health department, hospital or school to check for available seasonal vaccine. Many doctors, health clinics and schools are providing vaccine to their patients and students, while local health departments, pharmacies and some hospitals are offering clinics to the public.

The Department continues to recommend seasonal flu vaccine for all children age 6 months to 18 years because children are vulnerable to flu-related complications, including death.

Date: November 24, 2009

/s/ Heather Howard
Heather Howard
Commissioner