

## New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Be Part of the Influenza Sentinel Surveillance Program

### Your help is needed

Sentinel providers are essential to influenza surveillance. They provide information which allows us to track the progression of seasonal influenza and can assist in the detection of novel influenza viruses. The need for surveillance is even greater in light of increasing signs of a possible pandemic. Please consider having your clinic/practice represented in this vital public health program.

Most sentinel providers report that it takes them **between 20 and 40 minutes a week** to compile and report their surveillance data.

### What is an influenza sentinel provider?

- An influenza sentinel provider conducts surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS), local health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Data reported by sentinel providers, in combination with other influenza surveillance data, provide a national picture of influenza virus and ILI activity in the United States.
- New Jersey would like to enroll 40 providers throughout New Jersey.
- Year-round surveillance is now encouraged in order to monitor for a novel influenza virus that could signal a pandemic. Since a novel influenza virus could show up any time of year.

### Who can be an influenza sentinel provider?

- Providers of any specialty (e.g., family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, infectious disease) are eligible to be sentinel providers.
- Providers in any type of practice (e.g., private practice, public health clinic, urgent care center, emergency room, university student health center) are eligible to be sentinel providers.

### What data do sentinel providers collect and how is this information reported?

- Sentinel providers report the total number of patient visits each week and number of patient visits for influenza-like illness by age group (0-4 years, 5-24 years, 25-64 years,  $\geq 65$  years).
- These data are transmitted once a week via the internet or fax to a central data repository at CDC, which NJDHSS and local public health agencies can access and use to track disease levels.

### Why volunteer?

- Health care providers represent the first line of defense in the recognition of an unusual case or clusters of influenza. This system helps to integrate physicians into public health functions.
- Data from sentinel providers are critical for monitoring the impact of influenza, because influenza viruses are constantly evolving and cause substantial morbidity and mortality (approximately 36,000 deaths) every winter.
- In combination with other influenza surveillance data, sentinel data can be used to guide prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection, and patient care. This information is critical for protecting the public's health.
- Sentinel providers will be offered specimen collection kits and commercial rapid antigen detection kits for influenza – **FREE OF CHARGE**.
- NJDHSS can assist with the delivery of select influenza specimens to NJDHSS Public Health and Environmental Laboratories for viral isolation and subtyping.
- All participating providers who report information during the year will receive a participation certificate from the CDC along with optional subscriptions to Morbidity and Mortality Weekly (MMWR) and Emerging Infectious Disease Journal.

For more information, contact the NJDHSS Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program, Influenza Surveillance Program at **(609) 588-7500**.

