

MEMORANDUM

TO: AHCA/NCAL Leadership and Members

FROM: Janice Zalen, Sr. Director of Special Programs

SUBJECT: **H1N1 and Seasonal Influenza Update No. 28**

DATE: December 2, 2009

Nationally, visits to doctors for influenza-like illness (ILI) continue to decrease. This is the fourth consecutive week of national decreases in ILI after four consecutive weeks of sharp increases. However, visits to doctors for ILI still remain high. The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 4.3%, which is above the national baseline of 2.3%. Influenza hospitalization rates also are beginning to decline, but remain higher than expected for this time of year. Hospitalization rates continue to be highest in younger populations. The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was above the epidemic threshold for the eighth consecutive week.

Because the timing and spread of influenza viruses are unpredictable, CDC continues to recommend vaccination with seasonal influenza vaccine and 2009 H1N1 vaccine for those people identified as priority groups for the vaccinations. Even if flu activity has peaked for the current wave, it is possible that other waves of influenza activity may occur – caused by either 2009 H1N1 viruses or regular seasonal flu viruses.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccine is Available to LTC

A major distributor of seasonal vaccine, FFF, will have vaccine available soon and they are working with AHCA to ensure that LTC facilities are top priority. If you are in need of seasonal vaccine for your residents and/or employees and you have not yet done so, please fill out AHCA's brief survey by clicking [here](#). The survey information will be forwarded directly to FFF, who will contact you.

CMS to Conduct H1N1 Broadcast on December 4

CMS will conduct a [broadcast](#) regarding the H1N1 Influenza virus on Friday December 4 at 1 PM – 2:30 PM EST. The Webcast will be available for viewing up to one year following December 4 at <http://surveyortraining.cms.hhs.gov>. The broadcast will provide surveyors with an overview of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic virus and present recommended best practices for facilities, including both disaster planning needs and infection control requirements. CMS also will cover the current

immunization situation, including availability and vaccination strategies. For more information on the broadcast and how to participate, please click [here](#).

OSHA Issues Compliance Directive

On November 20, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued [Enforcement Procedures](#) to ensure uniform inspections of health care facilities for worker protection against H1N1 influenza.

The Compliance Directive closely follows CDC guidance, which recommends that health care workers wear fit-tested N95 respirators when in close contact with suspected or confirmed infected patients and that work places implement engineering and administrative controls. In response to complaints, OSHA inspectors will check that healthcare employers implement a hierarchy of controls, and encourage vaccination and other work practices recommended by the CDC. Where respirators are required to be used, the OSHA Respiratory Protection standard must be followed, including worker training and fit testing. When respirators are not commercially available, an employer will be considered to be in compliance if the employer can show a good faith effort has been made to acquire respirators.

Where OSHA inspectors determine that a facility has not violated any OSHA requirements but that additional measures could enhance the protection of employees, OSHA may provide the employer with a hazard alert letter outlining suggested measures to further protect workers.

For more detailed information about the compliance directive, please see AHCA's regulatory blog at <http://regupdate.blogspot.com/2009/12/osha-issues-h1n1-enforcement-procedures.html>.

NIOSH Respirator Web Resource

NIOSH has developed a new respirator web page containing information that should be regarded as a reliable source to identify NIOSH-approved respirators; how to obtain products; and how to use them. The page may be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/RespSource.html.