



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency

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Gail Newel, MD, MPH, Health Officer

To: Santa Cruz County Licensed Healthcare Facilities

From: Gail Newel, MD, MPH

Santa Cruz County Health Officer

Date: September 9, 2022

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

Background Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data from October 4, 2021, through April 30, 2022 showed that flu vaccines reduced people's risk of mild to moderate flu illness by 35% overall. Flu vaccination has been shown in several studies to [reduce severity of illness](#) in people who get vaccinated but still get sick, reducing the risk of serious outcomes like hospitalization and death.

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.

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 2022-2023 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, 2022, to March 31, 2023**. 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 2023-2024 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 2022-2023 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.

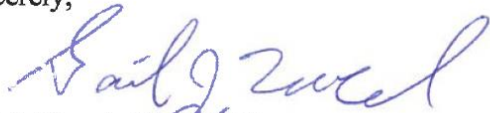
However, it is recommended that all facilities not explicitly mentioned above, require HCWs who provide direct patient care or who work in patient care areas to receive the annual influenza vaccine or mask.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gail J. Newel".

Gail J. Newel, MD, MPH
Health Officer, County of Santa Cruz