



London Breed  
Mayor

San Francisco Department of Public Health  
Greg Wagner  
Acting Director of Health  
Tomas J. Aragón, MD, DrPH  
Health Officer

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** 2018-8-23

**TO:** Hospitals, Skilled Nursing, and other Long Term Care Facilities in San Francisco

**FROM:** Tomas J. Aragón, MD, DrPH  
Health Officer 

**SUBJECT:** Health Officer Order: Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Health Care Workers during Every Influenza Season

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As in previous years, I am issuing a Health Officer order mandating that all hospitals, skilled nursing, and other long term care facilities in the City and County of San Francisco require their health care workers (HCWs) to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask in patient care areas during the influenza season. For other clinical facilities, we strongly recommend implementation of a similar policy.

**Based on statewide influenza epidemiology and in accordance with the practice in many other California counties, this year we will again define the influenza season as spanning from November 1 through April 30 (11/1/2018-4/30/2019).** Modifications may still be possible based on local epidemiology, but are unlikely to result in a shorter seasonal span.

As leaders in health care, I know we share common goals: to minimize the spread of communicable diseases, provide outstanding healthcare for our community, and keep our workers healthy. Influenza infection affects 5 to 20 percent of the US population every year, leading to an estimated 3.1 million days of hospitalization and 31.4 million outpatient visits.<sup>1</sup> HCWs are at risk for influenza illness and can transmit the virus to their patients and coworkers. Patients in our health care facilities, especially young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with chronic health conditions, are at greater risk for influenza-related hospitalization and death.

Vaccination of health care workers against influenza reduces infection and absenteeism, prevents patient morbidity and mortality, and results in financial savings to our communities and the health care system. Healthy People 2020 objectives target a 90 percent seasonal influenza vaccination rate for all health care personnel.<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive mandatory vaccination programs that include masking for unvaccinated health care workers have been associated with health care worker vaccination rates above 95%.<sup>3</sup>

State law provides that hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, long-term care facilities, and certain other health care facilities must offer influenza vaccination annually to employees, and for those employees that decline such vaccination, maintain a record of the signed declination form.<sup>4</sup> This order enhances patient protection by requiring unvaccinated health care workers to wear a face mask in patient care areas during the influenza season.

### **Order**

I, as the Health Officer of the City and County of San Francisco, am requiring that each and every hospital, skilled nursing, and long term care facility in San Francisco implement a program requiring its health care workers to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season while working in patient care areas.

### **Duration of Order**

This order is ongoing and applies to each influenza season unless the order is rescinded. The influenza season is hereby defined as November 1 through April 30. In any given year, if influenza surveillance data demonstrate unusually early and/or late peaks, I may shift or extend the period during which the masking program shall apply for that season.

### **Facilities Subject to the Order**

This order applies to hospitals, skilled nursing, and other long term care facilities. **For other clinical facilities, we strongly recommend implementation of a similar policy.**

### **Definition of HCWs**

For the purposes of this order, "health care workers" or "HCW" are persons, paid and unpaid, full-time or part-time, employees or contractors, working in the licensed health care facility, who have direct patient contact or who work in patient care areas.

I appreciate your help and support in protecting the residents of the City and County of San Francisco. For any additional questions, please contact the SFDPH Immunization Program at 415-554-2955.

cc: Greg Wagner, Acting Director of Health  
Aleeta Van Runkle, City Attorney

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<sup>1</sup> Molinari, NM, et al. (2007). The annual impact of seasonal influenza in the US: measuring disease burden and costs. *Vaccine*, 25, 5086-5096.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.health.vpeo.plc.gov/node/6361/data\\_details](http://www.health.vpeo.plc.gov/node/6361/data_details)

<sup>3</sup> Rakita, RM, et al. (2010). Mandatory influenza vaccination of health care workers: a 5-year study. *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*, 31, 881-888.

<sup>4</sup> CA Code of Regulations §5199: Aerosol Transmissible Diseases Standard of Cal OSHA, effective September 1, 2010.