

February 5, 2013

DAL: DAL 13-06
SUBJECT: Influenza and Disease Reporting

Dear Administrator:

Influenza affects millions of Americans each year and can be very serious or even life-threatening for the elderly and chronically ill. Adult Care Facility (ACF) staff and residents are encouraged to be vaccinated against influenza each year. In addition, ACFs must comply with reporting requirements to ensure effective surveillance of influenza. This letter is being sent to provide updated information on what is expected of ACFs in regard to preventing and reporting influenza cases or outbreaks among residents and staff.

The NYS DOH endorses annual influenza vaccination of all long term care residents and employees as the standard of care. Article 21-A of the New York State Public Health Law (PHL) requires ACFs to offer to provide or arrange for the influenza vaccine annually to all employees and residents. Article 21-A also requires operators of ACFs to submit an annual survey to the Department, due on May 1 each year, reporting the number of employees and residents who did not receive the influenza vaccination during the past influenza season, and the number of residents who have and have not received the pneumococcal vaccination at any time. Employees and residents may refuse the influenza vaccination for medical or religious reasons, or after being fully informed of the health benefits and risks of such action.

Additionally, Section 2.12 of the Public Health Law (PHL) requires, when no physician is in attendance, the person in charge of any “institution, school, hotel, boarding house, camp, vessel or any other public health nurse or any other person having knowledge of an individual affected with any disease presumably communicable, to report immediately the name and address of such person to the city, county or district health officer.”

If influenza or an influenza-like illness occurs among residents, operators should notify the personal physician of each ill resident. If lab testing is ordered by residents’ personal physicians and proves positive for influenza in one or more residents, the operator must report this information by telephone to the local health department, and may alert the personal physicians of all other residents that influenza infection has been identified the facility.

Reports should be made to the local health department as well as your NYSDOH regional office, and must be submitted within 24 hours of diagnosis. However, some diseases warrant prompt action and should be reported immediately to local health departments by telephone; these diseases are delineated on the Department's Communicable Disease Reporting Requirements webpage. This list of diseases, which includes influenza, and information on properly reporting can be found on the Department's website under Communicable Disease Reporting Requirements at the following link:

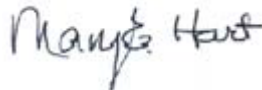
http://www.health.ny.gov/forms/instructions/doh-389_instructions.pdf

The reporting form is also available on the Department's website at: <http://www.health.ny.gov/forms/doh-389.pdf>. If you are unsure of your County Health Department's contact information, it can be accessed through the Department's website at the following link: http://www.nyscho.org/i4a/member_directory/feSearchForm.cfm?directory_id=2&pageid=3289&showTitle=1

Please remember, outbreaks of any illness, not only influenza, must be reported to your county health department and your NYSDOH regional office.

If you have any questions regarding these recommendations or reporting requirements, please contact your county health department or your regional office.

Sincerely,



Mary E. Hart, Director
Division of ACF/Assisted Living Surveillance

cc: Regional Office Program Managers