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**Patient Safety Program to Prevent Influenza**

**RATIONALE:**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect patients and yourself from influenza, and from spreading it to others. Influenza is one of the most common and vaccine-preventable diseases that can lead to hospitalization and death. Influenza kills more Americans each year than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined. Annually, more than 24,000-36,000 people die from the flu. [*Insert facility name]* highest priority is patient safety. As a trusted leader in caring for people and advancing health, we are responsible for delivering the best care in the safest environment. To achieve our goal as a national leader in patient safety and to protect our patients, [*insert facility*] requires influenza vaccinations for its employees, affiliated physicians, volunteers, students, contractors, and vendors. The policy is based on recommendations by all major regulatory, health, national, scientific and accrediting agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Nurses Association, and the American Medical Association.

**SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all workforce members to include employees, contracted employees, volunteers, physicians, residents, temporary workers, students and vendors at all facilities, ambulatory care centers, non-hospital operations centers such as business offices, the Corporate Office and all employees of owned physician practices. Annual influenza vaccination is required for contractors and vendor representatives who spend significant time in the facility in procedure or patient care areas. Licensed and Allied Health practitioners including physicians who are credentialed to provide care in [*Insert facility name]* will be required to comply with this policy subject to Medical Executive Committee approval.

**POLICY:** All managers of [*Insert facility name]* workforce members are responsible for ensuring that all workforce members are immunized against influenza each year unless an exemption has been granted as described below.

To prevent the transmission of influenza, a comprehensive approach is essential. In addition to vaccination, the primary method of prevention, the following are essential behaviors that will minimize or eliminate flu transmission:

1. Vaccination
2. Staying home when ill
3. Covering your cough (respiratory etiquette)
4. Hand Hygiene
5. Screening visitors for influenza-like illness
6. Early identification and isolation of patients with influenza like illness

**A. Annual Influenza Immunization**

1. All [*Insert facility name]* workforce members as described above must be immunized against influenza each year. Personnel with this requirement include, but are not limited to those with and without direct patient care/contact.
2. Influenza vaccine is available to all [*Insert facility name]* workforce members. Vaccination is coordinated through Employee/Occupational Health based on availability of influenza vaccine and generally occurs beginning in September to mid-October with availability through end of March for new employees hired late in the influenza season. In some circumstances, this time frame may be altered based on the occurrence of influenza outbreaks and other factors.
3. [*Insert facility name]* workforce members who are vaccinated through services other than [*Insert facility name]* Employee/Occupational Health (i.e., private physician office, public clinic, Walgreen or CVS clinics, etc.) must provide proof of immunization to their Employee/Occupational Health representatives.

**B. Deferral/Exemption**

1. Deferral/exemption to immunization may be granted for medical contraindications.
2. Workforce members requesting deferral/exemption due to medical contraindications must provide proof of medical contraindications such as a letter from their private physician.
3. Standard criteria for medical deferral/exemption will be established based upon recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as listed on their current Influenza Vaccine Information Sheet. The same standard criteria will be utilized at every facility to determine if a medical exemption will be granted.
4. Each request for deferral/exemption, regardless of reason, will be evaluated individually by Employee Occupational Health or other qualified personnel at the hospital or service organization level.
5. The outcome of the deferral/exemption request review will be communicated in writing to the workforce member within days of receipt of the request by Employee/Occupational Health.
6. If the deferral/exemption is granted for a “**temporary”** condition, the workforce member must resubmit a request for deferral/exemption each year. Temporary is defined as not able to be vaccinated within the current flu season.
7. If an exemption is granted for a **permanent** condition consistent with Center for Disease Control (CDC) standards and manufacturers’ safety profiles, (e.g. a history of severe allergy to chicken eggs, a history of Guillain-Barre after a previous influenza vaccination, a history of a severe reaction to a component of the flu vaccine), the exemption does NOT need to be requested each year unless vaccine technology changes to eliminate issues regarding such allergies.
8. An exemption will be granted if a workforce member provides written documentation from a physician that they have already received the flu vaccine for the season. Written documentation includes an official form (e.g. provider signed vaccine administration record) from the provider that administered the vaccine. Documentation must include 1) workforce member name, 2) date of vaccination, 3) name, dose, and lot number of vaccine, and 4) name, address and phone number of provider.

**C. Infection Control Procedures**

Workforce members will be required to stay at home if they develop flu like symptoms (e.g. fever 101 degrees or greater, cough, sore throat, muscle aches). Workforce members who are ill will not return to work until they are both symptom free, and fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications.

**D. Vaccination Records:**

Records of workforce member influenza vaccination should be maintained and communicated to management personnel who are accountable for making certain their direct reports either have received vaccination or an exemption as described above.

**E. Vaccination Administration Period:**

Determination of the vaccine administration period is a facility decision**.** For example, vaccination administration period usually begins in September or October annually, eventually resulting in workforce members either vaccinated or granted a deferral exemption prior to December 15.

**F. Vaccination Shortage**:

Management of a vaccine shortage is a facility decision. For example, Influenza vaccine may be offered to workforce members based on job function and risk of exposure to flu where priority is given to those who provide direct, hands-on patient care with prolonged face-to-face contact with patients and/or have the highest risk of exposure to patients with influenza.