

August 25, 2020

Dear Hospital and Health System Leaders,

On behalf of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association (MHA) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), thank you for your tireless efforts to save lives and provide high-quality care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your efforts during these difficult times are appreciated.

While COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are not as high as they were in the spring, we continue to see hundreds of new cases each day, and the virus remains a constant threat to the health of Michiganders. The MHA and the MDHHS are also actively preparing for a potential increase in cases in the fall, as schools reopen, and more people gather indoors. We also expect the fall and winter seasons to be particularly challenging because we will be faced with COVID-19 and influenza viruses concurrently circulating in the community. Together, these viruses will threaten the lives of many Michiganders and could put a significant strain on hospitals.

Based on Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR) data, only 31.2% of Michiganders received a flu vaccine during the influenza season last year. Nationally, during the 2019-2020 flu season, there were an estimated 39-56 million influenza illnesses and between 24-62 thousand influenza deaths. It was also estimated that the influenza virus led to 18-26 million influenza-related medical visits and 410-740 thousand influenza hospitalizations.

To that end, **together we must vaccinate as many Michiganders as possible for influenza during the 2020-2021 season.** The vaccine should be administered to any individual over 6 months of age who does not have a contraindication. The MDHHS is working with the CDC and local health departments to expand access to the vaccine and has federal funding available to support partners in these efforts. The MHA and the MDHHS are also working together to inform the community about these resources and to engage hospitals to be a vaccine resource.

Healthcare systems are key partners in increasing the influenza vaccine this year. The MHA and the MDHHS are requesting support from healthcare systems in the following ways:

1. **Use existing outreach modalities such as mobile clinics or established COVID-19 testing locations to offer the influenza vaccine.** Many of you have existing partnerships with community-based organizations and local health departments, which have been strengthened during the pandemic. You may also already have mobile vans and staff who can partner with these entities to provide community-based vaccination clinics. Consider offering joint testing for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV at current COVID-19 testing sites. The MDHHS is available to help you develop these plans and can also provide funding support. The MHA is also seeking private grant funding to support these types of efforts.
2. **Offer influenza vaccination services in nontraditional settings, such as emergency departments or outpatient clinics.** Many patients most vulnerable to influenza and COVID-19 may not seek care outside of an emergency department setting, and some individuals are still hesitant to seek routine or preventive medical care because of the pandemic. Now more than ever, healthcare providers must maximize the opportunity presented during a clinical

encounter to promote critical medical services, such as the influenza vaccine. The MHA and the MDHHS are available to support you in developing these plans.

- 3. Consider mandating and offering the influenza vaccine to all staff employed by your healthcare system, including those who do not directly work with patients.** Many health systems already mandate influenza vaccination for clinical staff, but not all do for nonclinical staff. Nonclinical staff can become infected with influenza and pass it on to patients and other staff. Expanding vaccination requirements to this group can protect hospital workers and patients and further prevent spread of influenza in the community. Please note that as we do every year, the MHA and the MDHHS will issue a letter and toolkit to hospitals and healthcare systems that will be dedicated to healthcare personnel vaccines this fall.
- 4. Join the MHA and the MDHHS in promoting influenza vaccination through elevation of public messaging campaigns and maximizing opportunities to engage stakeholders.** The MDHHS is launching a messaging campaign this summer. The MHA will be a key partner in amplifying this campaign. The MHA and MDHHS also partner with ivaccinate.org. Healthcare systems can build upon these initiatives or create and identify their own opportunities to elevate the importance of vaccinations in general, and the critical importance of influenza vaccines this fall. This outreach could include direct patient outreach to individuals who have not yet received their seasonal influenza vaccine.

As you build your vaccination efforts for the fall, please be mindful that it will be important to record immunizations in the MCIR for proper tracking. It is also important to note that the influenza season runs well into the spring, and vaccination efforts should be aggressive and consistent throughout the entire season. Finally, while no COVID-19 vaccine is currently approved, the plans developed for influenza vaccination can be easily adapted to COVID-19 when that becomes available. The MHA and MDHHS will keep you updated on developments regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information about how to develop your vaccination plans and resources available through the MDHHS, please contact:

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The following links also offer resources:

<http://www.michigan.gov/VaccinesDuringCOVID>

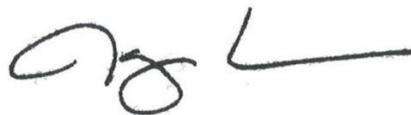
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/partners/childhood/stayingontrack.html>

Thank you for your partnership in what has been an incredibly challenging year. We are confident that together, with your leadership and commitment, Michigan will have a strong influenza vaccination effort this season, and we will save lives.

Sincerely,



Brian Peters
MHA CEO



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