



## The APIC Advocacy Agenda: Mandatory healthcare personnel influenza vaccination

### Influenza and Patient Care

Influenza is a serious disease that is associated with high rates of morbidity and mortality. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated **5% to 15% of the U.S. population is affected by the virus each year**. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that influenza infections result in more than **200,000 hospital admissions**. In addition, annual influenza epidemics account for **thousands of deaths each year, 3.1 million days of hospitalization, and 31.4 million outpatient visits.**\*

The most efficient method of preventing annual influenza epidemics and their associated morbidity and mortality, is through vaccination. Due to their exposure to patients, healthcare personnel (HCP) have an increased risk for acquiring influenza. Conversely, patients who are at greatest risk of developing severe complications of influenza are themselves more likely to be exposed through HCP contact. Therefore, one of the most important strategies to decrease influenza transmission to or from high risk persons is to immunize HCP.

To help reduce the spread of influenza in healthcare settings, the CDC has recommended annual influenza vaccinations for HCP since 1981. Despite this recommendation, a large minority of HCP avoid taking proper precautions such as participating in voluntary vaccination programs and not working while ill with influenza.

### Public Policy Initiative

APIC believes annual influenza vaccination of HCP offers an important method for preventing transmission of influenza to patients, especially those that are high-risk. Evidence supports the fact that influenza vaccine is effective, cost efficient and successful in reducing morbidity and mortality. Evidence also demonstrates that the current policy of voluntary vaccination has not been effective in achieving acceptable vaccination rates.

**APIC supports efforts by legislators to encourage acute care hospitals, long-term care, and other facilities that employ HCP to require an annual influenza immunization as a condition of employment unless there are evidence-based medical contraindications.** Mandatory vaccination policies have proven successful in many ways including:

- Multifaceted mandatory influenza vaccination programs have been found to be the single most effective strategy to increase HCP vaccination rates, with multiple facilities and systems achieving vaccination coverage of more than 95%;
- Several studies demonstrate that HCP influenza vaccination reduces patient mortality.
- Institutions that have implemented a mandatory policy have dramatically reduced employee absenteeism as well as healthcare-associated influenza, thereby improving patient safety and reducing healthcare costs.
- Influenza vaccines are safe. The most common side effects of the injectable vaccine include temporary soreness, redness, or swelling at the site of injection.

*\*Depending on the severity and length of the flu season, annual deaths from influenza vary from 3,300-49,000 .*

## **APIC efforts to promote HCP influenza vaccination**

As a leader in infection prevention and patient safety, APIC is a vocal supporter of requiring HCP to receive an annual influenza vaccination as a condition of employment. APIC has:

- Issued a position statement outlining our support for mandatory influenza vaccination for HCP;
- Supported including HCP influenza vaccination as a measure for Medicare payment determination in CMS quality reporting programs for acute care hospitals, long-term care hospitals, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, ambulatory surgical centers, inpatient psychiatric facilities, and cancer hospitals;
- Prepared an HCP Immunization toolkit providing infection preventionists and their employee/occupational health colleagues with a full spectrum of tools to assist with the appropriate use of vaccines within an HCP immunization program;
- Presented webinar explaining the “How To” of employee influenza vaccination programs;
- Promoted National Immunization Awareness Month;
- Offered educational programming at our Annual Conferences related to HCP influenza vaccinations.

For more information, access [APIC’s position statement on mandatory vaccination](#).

For more information in HCP influenza vaccination, access [http://www.flu.gov/planning-preparedness/hospital/hcworkers\\_vaccine.html](http://www.flu.gov/planning-preparedness/hospital/hcworkers_vaccine.html).

### **About APIC**

[APIC](#)’s mission is to create a safer world through prevention of infection. The association’s more than 15,000 members direct infection prevention programs that save lives and improve the bottom line for hospitals and other healthcare facilities. APIC advances its mission through patient safety, implementation science, competencies and certification, advocacy, and data standardization. Visit APIC online at [www.apic.org](http://www.apic.org). Follow APIC on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/apic](http://www.twitter.com/apic) and Facebook: [www.facebook.com/APICThroughPreventionandYou](http://www.facebook.com/APICThroughPreventionandYou). For information on what patients and families can do, visit APIC’s Infection Prevention and You website at [www.apic.org/infectionpreventionandyou](http://www.apic.org/infectionpreventionandyou).

### **What do infection preventionists do?**

**Infection preventionists play a significant role in:**

- Developing proven policies to ensure a safe environment for patients;
- Ensuring compliance with standards and regulations designed to protect patients and healthcare workers;
- Tracking and monitoring activities to identify and prevent healthcare-associated infections and other infectious agents;
- Leading and participating in healthcare quality improvement efforts designed to protect patients;
- Educating the public and healthcare personnel about infectious diseases and how to limit their spread;
- Serving as leaders in preparing healthcare facilities and personnel to be ready for events such as an influenza pandemic; infectious diseases such as Ebola; and acts of bioterrorism;
- Reporting communicable diseases to the CDC.

November 1, 2016

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