

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Health Department Proposes City Regulation:  
Influenza Vaccine Reporting Requirement for Healthcare Workers**

BALTIMORE, MD – (September 2, 2008) - The Baltimore City Health Department is proposing a regulation to require hospitals, long-term care facilities, and physicians' offices to report rates of influenza vaccination of healthcare workers.

Influenza in Baltimore City is both deadly and costly. Studies have shown that low vaccination rates among health care providers has led to influenza outbreaks among vulnerable patients in health care facilities. Several outbreaks in long-term care facilities have been reported in Baltimore in recent years. Improving vaccination coverage of health care workers has been proven to reduce the occurrence of influenza in health care settings, and is supported by a number of expert organizations including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Nurses Association, and the American College of Physicians.

Currently, Maryland law requires hospitals and long-term care facilities to offer influenza vaccine to employees, but there is no public reporting of vaccination rates. An informal Health Department survey of five Baltimore City hospitals found influenza vaccination coverage for employees ranging from 35% to 71% with none of the institutions achieving the CDC's recommendation of at least 80% coverage.

The new proposal would require all private, public, and community health clinics, hospitals and related institutions, and physician's offices to report influenza vaccination rates for all individuals providing direct patient care.

Each institution would have to file a simple report at the end of the flu season. The report would contain the number of healthcare workers who were eligible for influenza vaccination, the number of clinical staff who accepted the vaccination, and the aggregate numbers for each of three reasons for declination: (1) the vaccine is medically contraindicated, (2) the vaccine is against the employee's religious beliefs, or (3) after being fully informed by the related institution of the health risks associated with not receiving the vaccination, the employee declines the vaccination.

Institutions would be required to report employee vaccination data to the Baltimore City Health Department by May 1, 2009. The results would be public information.

“This is a sensible step to promote the lifesaving influenza vaccination and make healthcare facilities safer for patients,” said Dr. Laura Herrera, Deputy Health Commissioner and Chief Medical Officer of the Baltimore City Health Department.

A copy of the proposed regulation can be found on the Health Department’s website:  
<http://www.baltimorehealth.org>.

Please send comments, in writing, to Baltimore City Health Department, Attn: Dr. Laura Herrera, 210 Guilford Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202.

Public comment will be received through 5:00 PM September 24, 2008.

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