

February 16, 2007

Jon Abramson MD, ACIP Chairman
Larry K. Pickering, MD, ACIP Executive Secretary
ACIP Members and Liaisons
1600 Clifton Road, NE
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), Liaisons, and concerned others:

We, the undersigned organizations representing public health, private providers, advocacy and educational groups, and persons affected by disease, urge you to move forward in 2007 with recommendations for universal childhood vaccination against influenza to include all children and teens through age 18 years. Too many Americans remain vulnerable to the serious effects of influenza disease because current vaccine recommendations do not go far enough.

We strongly support an immediate recommendation for routine influenza vaccination of school-aged children through 18 years of age. Targeted vaccination strategies in children are falling well short of goals. In the 2004-05 influenza season, more than half of children aged 6 months to 23 months did not receive vaccine.¹ Among children aged 5 to 17 years who were household contacts of high-risk persons, only 10.8% were vaccinated.²

Vaccinating children against influenza reduces the spread of influenza in households and communities, and helps protect those at high risk of influenza complications from acquiring the disease. Vaccination of school children in Japan provided protection and reduced mortality from influenza in older persons.³ Recent school-based vaccination efforts in the United States have lowered influenza-like symptoms and outcomes in households where children were vaccinated.⁴

Vaccine production capacity has increased greatly over the last several years, with three manufacturers producing vaccine for use in children and at least two additional childhood products pending approval and licensure by the Food and Drug Administration. It is critical that this production be sustained and increased through continued expansion of the childhood recommendations.

A universal recommendation for routine annual influenza vaccination for all persons through age 18 years would simplify the current targeted recommendations, sustain and build manufacturing capacity, and provide benefits to individuals by reducing morbidity and mortality, providing herd immunity protection, and enhancing vaccine access.

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Preliminary findings from discussions with public health and healthcare opinion leaders conducted by Emory University found support for universal influenza vaccination in school-aged children.⁵ Public and private sector infrastructure supported the expansion of routine influenza vaccination to children aged 6 to 59 months as supply of the vaccine increased and will continue to expand to support a recommendation for school-aged children.

All of us acknowledge that, for several years following the publication of a universal childhood influenza vaccination recommendation, it is unlikely that we will achieve high vaccination levels of children and teens for a number of reasons, including insufficient supplies and difficulties in accessing all school-age children in a clinic setting during influenza vaccination season. The ACIP recommendations should certainly reflect that fact. However, we believe it is essential to move forward with the goal of universal vaccination for children now, so that vaccination rates have an opportunity to rise and protect our nation's population over the next several years. The sooner we begin, the sooner we will have a better-protected population.

You have an opportunity to protect children against a serious disease, while at the same time protect their communities and households from the spread of disease and support the continued growth of our nation's vaccine manufacturing capacity. We urge you to bring a universal influenza vaccination recommendation for school-age children through 18 years of age before the full ACIP for a vote at the February 21, 2007, meeting.

All the undersigned organizations support universal vaccination for all school-age children and teens through age 18 years.

We request that you make copies of this letter available for all the members of the public who attend the ACIP meeting in February.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Academy of Physician Assistants

American College Health Association

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American College of Preventive Medicine

American Hospital Association

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American Immunization Registry Association

American Lung Association

American Nurses Association

American Osteopathic Association

American Pharmacists Association

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists

Association for Prevention Teaching and Research

The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)

Association of Immunization Managers

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists

Every Child By Two

Families Fighting Flu, Inc.

Flu Busters

GetAFluShot.com

Healthy Solutions, Inc.

Hepatitis B Foundation

Immunization Action Coalition

Maxim Health Systems

Meningitis Angels

National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors

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National Association of Community Health Centers, Inc.

National Association of County & City Health Officials

National Association of Local Boards of Health

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP)

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition

National Hispanic Medical Association

National Medical Association

National Meningitis Association

National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable

Nurse Practitioner Healthcare Foundation

PKIDS (Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases)

Prevention MD

Society for Adolescent Medicine

Society of Teachers of Family Medicine

**Vaccine Education Center
The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia**

Visiting Nurse Associations of America (VNAA)

State or Regional Organizations

Adult Immunization Coalition of Tompkins County, New York

Alaska Diabetes Prevention and Control Program

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American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago

Arizona Association of Community Health Centers

The Arizona Partnership for Immunization

Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department, Texas

Berks Visiting Nurse Association, Pennsylvania

Bucks County Immunization Coalition, Pennsylvania

The Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Baltimore, Maryland

Central Michigan District Health Department

ChesPenn Health Services, Pennsylvania

Chester County Immunization Coalition, Pennsylvania

Chicago Area Immunization Campaign, Illinois

Colorado Influenza and Pneumococcal Alert Coalition

Colorado Wellness Connection, LLC

Columbus Public Health, Ohio

The Consortium for Healthy & Immunized Communities, Inc., Ohio

Danbury Visiting Nurse Association, Connecticut

Dane County Immunization Coalition, Inc., Wisconsin

Detroit Medical Center, Michigan

District Health Department # 2, Michigan

DuPage County Health Department, Illinois

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Essex Metro Immunization Coalition, New Jersey

Evanston Health Department, Illinois

Greater Lehigh Valley Visiting Nurse Association, Pennsylvania

Hackley Visiting Nurse Services & Hospice, Inc., Michigan

Hawaii Immunization Coalition

Hillsborough County Health Department, Florida

Home Health Care Management, Pennsylvania

Immunization Coalition of Delaware

Immunization Coalition of Washington, DC

Iowa Immunization Coalition

Kenosha Immunization Coalition, Wisconsin

Kenosha Visiting Nurse Association, Inc., Wisconsin

Langlade County Immunization Coalition, Wisconsin

Larimer County Immunization Coalition, Colorado

LifeCare Alliance, Ohio

Louisiana Health Care Review

Maniilaq Public Health Nursing, Alaska

Maryland Partnership for Prevention, Inc.

Mile Hi Immunizations - Denver, Colorado

Minnesota Coalition for Adult Immunization

Montgomery County Health Department, Pennsylvania

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Mountain Park Health Centers, Arizona

MPRO, Michigan's Quality Improvement Organization

New Mexico Immunization Coalition

Northeast Wisconsin Immunization Coalition

Northern Nevada Immunization Coalition

Norwell Visiting Nurse Association, Inc., Massachusetts

Okaloosa County Health Department, Florida

Oregon Partnership to Immunize Children (OPIC)

Pennsylvania Immunization Coalition

PMDA, Pennsylvania's Association for Long-Term Care Medicine

Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association, Connecticut

Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice, Vermont

St. Croix-Pierce Immunization Coalition, Wisconsin

San Diego Immunization Initiative (I-3), California

Sarasota County Health Department, Florida

Seminole County Health Department, Florida

Somerset School District, Wisconsin

Southern Nevada Immunization Coalition

Texas Medical Association

Tompkins County Health Department, New York

Trinity Visiting Nurse & Homecare Association, Illinois

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Tulsa Area Immunization Coalition, Oklahoma

Vaccinate Alaska Coalition (VAC)

Visiting Nurse Association Health Services, Michigan

Visiting Nurse Association of Pottstown & Vicinity, Pennsylvania

Visiting Nurse Association-St. Louis, Missouri

Visiting Nurse Association of Western Michigan

Visiting Nurses Association of Greater New Orleans, Inc., Louisiana

Visiting Nurse Service, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Visiting Nurse Services of Michigan

Visiting Nurse Services of Newport and Bristol Counties, Rhode Island

Warren County Health Services, New York

Washington County Immunization Coalition-West Bend, Wisconsin

Wharton County Immunization Coalition, Texas

Will County Health Department, Illinois

Wright County Public Health, Minnesota

^{1,2} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Estimates of influenza vaccination target population sizes in 2006 and recent vaccine uptake levels. Access at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>, December 6, 2006.

³ Reichert TA, Sugaya N, Fedson DS, Glezen WP, et al. The Japanese experience with vaccinating schoolchildren against influenza. *Vaccine*. 2005;23:1284-1293.

⁴ King JC, Stoddard JJ, Gaglani MJ, Moore KA, et al. Effectiveness of school-based influenza vaccination. *N Engl J Med*. 2006;355:2523-32.

⁵ Orenstein WA, Protzel-Berman P. Universal Influenza Vaccination in the United States: Are We Ready? Association of Immunization Managers/CDC Program Managers Meeting presentation, December 8, 2006.