

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH
Surgeon General and Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

January 17, 2018

Dear Daycare Administrator:

Influenza or 'flu' activity is high across the state and the nation. Flu usually spreads more quickly among children than in all other age groups. **So far this season, 23 outbreaks have been reported in facilities serving children.** There have been 107 total outbreaks reported, which is more outbreaks than reported in previous seasons at this time. **Sadly, two flu-associated deaths in children have been reported so far this season in Florida.** Both of these deaths occurred in children who were not vaccinated. **The flu vaccine is safe, and continues to be the best way to protect your attendees, staff, and their families from the flu.**

Please ask staff to get vaccinated and send a letter home to parents encouraging vaccination and to keep sick children home (draft provided).

People with flu are most likely to infect others soon after symptoms begin. This means **it is important to review facility illness exclusion policies with staff and parents to ensure children sick with flu are rapidly identified and excluded and to ensure parents keep children home when they are sick.** Symptoms of the flu often include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headaches, or fatigue.

The Florida Department of Health urges childcare facilities to help fight the flu by:

- **Sending a letter to parents encouraging influenza vaccination;**
 - Also, share "The Flu: A Guide for Parents" fact sheet found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/fluguideforparents.pdf>
 - Please visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/findaflushot> to find a flu shot in your area.
- **Encouraging your staff to get vaccinated;**
- **Ensuring rapid identification of sick children and staff, and ensuring they stay home when they are sick;**
- Encouraging children and staff to cover their noses and mouths with tissue when they cough or sneeze. Daycare attendees and staff should wash their hands often using soap and warm water, and encourage children and staff to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth; and
- **Cleaning and disinfecting** commonly handled surfaces or objects.

To learn more on fighting flu, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/>.

Contact your local county health department to report any suspected influenza outbreaks right away (www.floridahealth.gov/CHDEpiContact).

Thank you for your important contribution to protecting the health of those in the community you serve.

Sincerely,

Carina Blackmore, DVM, PhD, Dipl ACVPM
Director, Division of Disease Control & Health Protection
State Epidemiologist