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Subject: 2022 Flu Season Preparedness

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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Date: October 17, 2022

To: Assisted Living Facilities and Adult Day Care Centers

From: Tara Davis-Ragland, Division Director

Subject: The 2022 Flu Season Preparedness Alert for Assisted Living Facilities and Adult Day Care Programs.

This memo provides information on the anticipated 2022 flu season and advocates for readiness in infection prevention and control efforts by licensed assisted living facilities and adult day care programs.

Introduction

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) estimates that about 41 million people are infected with the flu annually, resulting in almost 52 000 deaths. A challenging flu season is anticipated this fall and winter with cases being noted earlier in than the typical season. Since Influenza seasons can be unpredictable, preparation through early planning for vaccination, public health education, and infection control advocacy remain key winning strategies.

Annual flu vaccination and risk groups

According to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), annual flu vaccination is recommended for people who are at higher risk of being exposed to or developing severe complications from the flu or COVID -19, including caregivers of people who are at higher risk of both diseases and:

- Residents and participants 50 and older, these demographics account for most hospitalizations and death from flu and COVID-19.
- Those with underlying medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease, neurologic disorders, and immunocompromised persons. These people are at higher risk of serious outcomes for the flu and COVID-19.
- Household contacts and those who provide care for people who are most vulnerable to serious flu or COVID-19 illness and death.
- Essential workers who constantly interact with the public are more likely to be exposed to both disease conditions.

What should providers do?

- Plan to get vaccinated before the flu spreads in the community (September and October are good times to get the flu vaccine).
- Promote hand washing with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Promote respiratory hygiene and proper [cough etiquette](#).
- Adhere to the facility or center's work exclusion and return to work policy for exposed or symptomatic staff.
- Post health education signage to help staff, residents, and volunteers
- Comply with public health measures at all facilities and centers.
- Contact the point of contact at your local health department or VHD for guidance when needed.
- Reach out to your VDSS regional infection preventionist consultant with your infection control questions and concerns.
- Consult credible sources such as the [VDH](#), [CDC](#), and [NIH](#) for more information about the flu and other communicable/infectious diseases.

What is VDSS doing?

The 2022 flu season is upon us. The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Infection Prevent and Control Team (IPCT) continue to conduct onsite assessment visits to ALFs and ADCCs as part of the ELC grant from the Virginia Department of Health. The IPCT can evaluate your infection control program to assist in the reduction or spread of flu this season. The IPCT can also assist in providing recommendations for safely holding holiday celebrations.

- If your facility or center has not already participated in the ongoing infection control survey, you are highly encouraged to do so as we move into the fall and winter.
- Assisted living facilities and Adult day programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia have been participating since June 2022.
- After each assessment, feedback is shared with the facilities or centers.
- This survey is non-punitive and solely aimed at improving infection control practices and make facilities and centers safe for residents and participants.

Please, submit your facility's infection control plan and other infectious disease policies if you have not already done so to IPCTeam@dss.virginia.gov or faxed to (804) 819-7069.

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to assisting you and your staff.