
Ascension Texas Ministry Policy

Patient and Health Care Personnel Safety- Influenza Vaccination

**Pushed out by Ascension Health 9-4-18*

Adopted by:

Ascension Texas: 09/19/2018

Seton Healthcare Family: 09/19/2018

Providence Healthcare: 09/19/2018

SUBJECT: Patient and Health Care Personnel Safety-Influenza Vaccination

Subject: This Policy is grounded in our Mission to provide spiritually-centered holistic care to all persons and improve the health of those individuals and communities we serve. In alignment with our values of Reverence and Integrity, this document is intended to establish guidelines with respect to safely protecting patients and maintaining a healthy workforce from the spread of influenza.

This Policy applies to all associates of Ascension Texas Ministry, (collectively referred to herein as "Ministry"), including all Health Care Personnel (HCP).

Performance of the requirements outlined in this Policy should be documented and maintained in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations and policies on document retention.

Definitions:

As used within this Policy:

- 1) **Influenza:** A contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses. The illness can cause mild to severe symptoms, and at times lead to death. Influenza virus may be shared for up to 24 hours before symptoms begin, increasing the risk of transmission to others. Influenza viruses change often, making annual vaccination, which has been shown to be safe, protective and effective in decreasing influenza-related morbidity and mortality, necessary.
- 2) **Influenza Season:** A defined period (generally spanning from October 1 through March 31), when influenza incidence is highest, for which the official onset and conclusion as pertaining to the Ministry will be determined by Infection Prevention and Control.
- 3) **Health Care Personnel ("HCP"):** All employed and non-employed individuals providing services for the ministry.

Designated Reviewing Body: Designee(s) identified to review medical and religious declination submissions per legal and best practice standards. May include,

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but is not limited to, Human Resources, Mission Integration, Infection Prevention and Control, Associate Health and Legal.

Guidelines:

The goal of this Policy is to ensure the offering of annual influenza vaccinations for HCP and improve influenza vaccination rates as a supporting program to patient and HCP safety.

As a condition of employment, participating in or providing services in any program or capacity, and initiation and/or maintenance of medical staff privileges and membership, all HCP are required to receive annual influenza vaccination unless they are eligible for and have an approved medical contraindication or an approved religious exemption per the designated reviewing body.

HCP seeking exemption from annual influenza vaccination by virtue of a medical contraindication or religious belief must submit written request with supporting documentation as outlined within this policy.

All HCP will be provided access to information and education, at a minimum, regarding the influenza vaccine; non-vaccine control and prevention measures; and the diagnosis, transmission and impact of influenza.

Individual program responsibilities, supporting procedures and operations are the responsibility of each local ministry.

1. The annual deadlines for compliance with mandatory Influenza vaccination, submission of exemption requests (with no late submissions accepted unless otherwise outlined within this policy or legally required), and granting of exemptions as identified in this policy will be communicated each year. Annual effective dates for influenza season will be confirmed or identified changes communicated by Infection Prevention and Control as per local incidence. In the event of a vaccine shortage, time frames may be subject to change.
2. HCP who have not complied, per the annually established and communicated influenza vaccination timelines, will not be permitted to work or provide services until documentation of receipt of the vaccination is confirmed and/or an exemption is granted. An HCP who fails to meet the requirement, will be suspended pending further investigation in accordance with the "Associate Coaching, Counseling and Corrective Action Guidelines," For non-employed HCP, ongoing failure to comply shall be deemed as grounds for voluntarily resigning and/or cease providing services.

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3. Designated reviewing body shall have complete and absolute discretion to interpret submitted information and supporting documentation and may obtain the advice of additional content experts as necessary. The decision of the designated reviewing body shall be deemed final.

All local and state requirements supersede all requirements as written in this guideline.

Associates who are governed by and subject to a Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) should refer to that agreement for their rights and duties related to this policy. The terms of the CBA shall control regarding applicability of the policy

Key Points:

Medical and Religious Declination:

1. Religious declinations are not considered permanent and must be submitted for consideration annually. Religious declination must include a written statement indicating the HCP’s opposition to influenza vaccination and the following:
 - A belief that has a sufficiently reasonable religious component
 - Conveyance of moral conscience
 - An integration between the religious beliefs and sincerity of behaviors demonstrated through daily life
2. Medical declination must include supporting medical documentation signed by a licensed health care provider who is providing ongoing medical care for the associate. The documentation should indicate the HCP has a condition contraindicated for influenza vaccination. Contraindications include:
 - Severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis)
 - History of Guillain-Barre Syndrome within 6 weeks after a previous influenza vaccination
 - Medical condition in which licensed provider clearly recommends deferral of influenza vaccination will be considered
3. If a granted exemption is deemed permanent, annual submission is not required. If a granted exemption is deemed temporary, HCP must resubmit exemption request annually. Permanent exemptions may be rescinded in the event CDC and/or best practice guidelines change or advancement in the art of vaccination design occurs, at which time the HCP will be notified that declination resubmission is required.

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Attachments:

[Influenza Vaccination - Medical Declination Form](#)
[Influenza Vaccination - Religious Declination Form](#)

Approved by ATPAC: 9-17-18