STATE OF WASHINGTON

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VACCINATION REMINDER: COVID-19, FLU, RSV, AND PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINES

Dear Provider, Administrator, or Superintendent,

Flu, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are highly contagious respiratory illnesses. COVID-19 circulates throughout the year while flu and RSV increase in circulation between the months of October through March. Pneumococcal disease is the most common cause of pneumonia and is known to spread throughout this time of year as well. It is possible to become infected with more than one of these illnesses, sometimes at the same time. Prepare for the upcoming respiratory illness season with vaccination.

The flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumococcal vaccines are your best protection against these illnesses. Vaccines help to lower the risk of becoming infected and can decrease the risk of severe illness if infected. Vaccinations help protect you, essential health care workers, and your residents or clients.

To minimize the impact of COVID-19, flu, RSV, and pneumococcal disease in your facility or home:

1. **Encourage ALL residents, clients, and staff to stay up to date on their COVID-19 and flu vaccines as soon as possible AND encourage eligible residents, clients, and staff to get the RSV and pneumococcal vaccines as needed.**

    - **COVID-19 vaccine:** The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) recommends everyone six months and older stay up to date with all COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended to them. Visit COVID-19 Vaccine Information for up-to-date information.
    - **Flu vaccine:** Everyone six months and older should get a flu vaccine every year. Fall is the best time to get vaccinated because it ensures protection before flu begins to circulate widely. Visit Flu Overview for more information.
    - **RSV vaccine:** All adults 75 years and older and those age 50-74 at increased risk (weak immune systems, chronic medical conditions, or live in nursing homes or other medical facilities) are recommended to receive one dose of RSV vaccine. Visit Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) for more information.
    - **Pneumococcal vaccine:** There are different vaccines that are recommended, depending on a person's age and risk factors. Visit Pneumococcal Disease and Vaccine for more information.

2. **Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently.** Many of the healthy habits used to prevent flu also help prevent RSV, COVID-19, and pneumococcal illness.

3. **Consider wearing a face mask.** Masks may help prevent people who have respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 from spreading to others. Visit What To Do When You Are Sick With COVID-19 or Another Respiratory Virus for more information.
4. **Stay home and away from others if sick.** Prevent the spread of illness by having policies or protocols in place for staff to stay home if they are experiencing symptoms of a respiratory viral illness. Visit What To Do When You Are Sick With COVID-19 or Another Respiratory Virus or Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 for more information.
5. **Be familiar with the reporting and notification rules for your setting. Contact your local health jurisdiction (LHJ) whenever a resident or client tests positive for COVID-19 or flu, or if you see a sudden increase in acute respiratory illness (two or more ill residents or clients within 72 hours).** Your LHJ can advise on testing, antiviral treatment, prophylaxis, and infection control. Visit www.doh.wa.gov/localhealth to find your LHJ. If your long-term care setting rules require you to notify the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), use the online reporting tool or call the hotline at 1-800-562-6078.
6. **Review your facility/home's ability to implement infection prevention standards and meet the health care needs of residents/clients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or flu.** A facility or home can admit or readmit a recently ill resident or client if it determines they can meet all care and service needs AND comply with infection control standards. For additional infection control guidance, all care settings may refer to Influenza Outbreak in Long Term Care Facilities Frequently Asked Questions. Nursing homes should also review Infection Control Guidance: SARS-CoV-2 | COVID-19 for requirements specific to their setting. Community-based settings may additionally review Preventing Respiratory Illnesses | Respiratory Illnesses | CDC.

We encourage you to continue following the Standards for Adult Immunization. You can reduce missed opportunities for vaccination by assessing each client's vaccination status at every clinical encounter. A health care professional's recommendation is the strongest predictor of whether a client gets vaccinated.

Thank you for your continued efforts to help fight flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumococcal disease.

Sincerely,

Amy Abbot, Director
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