Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

**Protect residents and staff from flu and pneumonia this season.** Flu is highly contagious and can infect facilities like yours through newly admitted residents, visitors and staff. Residents can experience severe and fatal illness during flu season, and pneumonia is one of the most common flu complications.

To minimize the impact of flu and pneumonia on the premises:

1. **Encourage ALL residents and staff to get vaccinated against flu when vaccine becomes available and encourage pneumococcal vaccination in those for whom it is appropriate.** Flu vaccine is updated every year to include protection against the most commonly circulating strains. Fall is the best time to receive the vaccine because it ensures protection before flu begins to circulate widely in Washington.

2. **Wash your hands often and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers frequently.** Promote proper hand-washing technique amongst staff and residents to help minimize transmission of germs. For infection control guidance, visit: [http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/fluoutbrk-LTCF.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/fluoutbrk-LTCF.pdf)

3. **Call your local health department if you notice a sudden increase in acute respiratory illness (two or more ill residents within 72 hours) OR when any resident tests positive for flu.** They can help with advice about testing, antiviral treatment, prophylaxis and infection control. To find your local health department, visit [www.doh.wa.gov/localhealth](http://www.doh.wa.gov/localhealth).

The following additional resources can help you prepare for this flu season:

- Department of Health: [www.doh.wa.gov/flu](http://www.doh.wa.gov/flu)
- Department of Social and Health Services: [https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/residential-care-services](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/residential-care-services) (Additional important immunization resources)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/) and [www.cdc.gov/Features/Pneumonia/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pneumonia/)
You are also encouraged to continue adhering to the Standards for Adult Immunization, which includes routinely assessing the immunization status of all residents, and strongly recommend and encourage vaccines they may need.

For more information about the Standards for Adult Immunizations, visit: http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults/for-practice/standards/index.html

If your facility provides immunizations, please administer and document any vaccines needed. If your facility does not provide immunizations, please refer residents to a vaccination provider and document that vaccines were given.

On-site vaccination clinics may be a convenient option for mass vaccinations for both staff and residents; you are encouraged to seek out availability in your area for more options.

Thank you for your continued efforts in protecting your vulnerable population and helping to fight flu each year.

Sincerely,

Candace Goehring, Director  Kathy Lofy, M.D.
Residential Care Services  State Health Officer
Department of Social & Health Services  Washington State Department of Health