



## IMPORTANT MESSAGE – MUST READ!!!

December 18, 2024– The New York State Health Commissioner declared today, that influenza has become prevalent in New York State. This requires regulated facilities and agencies to activate their policies and procedures to ensure that their personnel wear a surgical or procedure mask in areas where patients may be present if they have not received a flu vaccine and engage in activities in which they could expose patients to the flu if infected.

The measure is intended to protect patients from getting the flu from their healthcare workers. Influenza can be severe and cause death in persons with underlying medical conditions. Healthcare workers can pose a risk to patients by transmitting influenza infection. The regulation has the added benefit of protecting healthcare workers who are unvaccinated from acquiring the flu from patients and others.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against influenza, and it is important for individuals who come in contact with patients to be vaccinated to help prevent the spread of flu. For those who have not been vaccinated, this regulation is intended to provide patients and caregivers an added layer of protection.

The New York State Department of Health (DOH) regulatory requirement (Section 2.59 of the New York State Sanitary Code) that health care workers wear masks applies to health care settings regulated by DOH. The settings include general hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic and treatment centers, certified home health agencies, long term home health care programs, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) home care programs, licensed home care service agencies, limited licensed home care service agencies, and hospices.

The mask requirement remains in effect until the Commissioner declares influenza no longer prevalent in New York State.

**Staffing Employees** are encouraged to bring proof of their influenza vaccine when going to a facility. The facilities will provide masks for those employees that have not been immunized.

**Home Care Employees** that have not been immunized **MUST** wear a mask when caring for your client. A new mask must be worn each time you arrive on a new case. Remember that no flu shot is assumed until the office obtains a copy of your flu shot record for the current flu season.

If you have any questions, please contact the office immediately! Thank you for attention to this matter.