

**MANDATORY FLU VACCINE  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
SEE ALSO MANDATORY INFLUENZA VACCINATION HR POLICY 6.8**

**1) Why is Hamilton Health Care System (Hamilton) adopting a mandatory flu vaccine?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. The CDC states that even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it accordingly.

Hamilton receives our accreditation through The Joint Commission (TJC). TJC also encourages health care organization leaders and staff to mount a concerted effort to improve influenza immunization rates among health care professionals (HCP). TJC states that increasing influenza vaccination rates among HCP would reduce the burden of the disease and its associated health care risks and costs.

TJC broadly defines HCP as all paid and unpaid persons working in health care settings who have the potential for exposure to infectious materials. Some HCP provide direct patient care. Others, such as housekeepers, maintenance staff, vendors, volunteers, or outside contractors, have jobs that may put them into close contact with patients or the patient environment. TJC goes on to state that even HCP who do not come into close contact with patients are likely to have some contact with HCP who do—for example, by passing them in a hallway or eating in the same cafeteria with them.

Additionally, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced they will begin promoting health care organizations' flu vaccination in 2015.

Because of this regulatory emphasis on flu vaccination administration and in an effort to protect individuals in their organizations many of Hamilton's peers throughout Georgia and Southeast Tennessee have adopted a mandatory flu vaccination process. Hamilton has elected to take a similar stance and adopt a mandatory flu vaccination process.

**2) Who is required to receive the flu vaccine?**

This policy includes Associates (full-time, part-time, contract and Whitfield Staffing Services), Volunteers, Students, and Credentialed Providers. Credentialed Provider refers to all Medical Staff (Licensed Independent Practitioners), advance practice providers, Hamilton employed physicians and all personnel who have received official authorization to practice at HHCS.

**3) What is Hamilton designating as the 2013 – 2014 flu season?**

Each year the date to begin vaccine administration will be determined by Associate Health and the Infection Prevention Committee using Center for Disease Control (CDC) Guidelines. This group will determine the implementation plan for each season and will make adjustments to the start and completion date as necessary.

The Hamilton designated flu season is November 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014

**4) When is the due date for receiving the flu vaccine?**

**October 31, 2013**

**5) How do Students who receive the flu vaccine from a healthcare provider show proof of vaccination?**

If you receive the flu vaccine from a healthcare provider then you must provide certification from that provider showing receipt of the flu vaccine. Those who are vaccinated will provide proof of vaccination to the Director of Clinical Staff Services (Robin Green) and must do so by October 31<sup>st</sup>.

Medical Staff Services will maintain all elements of compliance and exemption documentation and document immunization status of credentialed / authorized providers in the credentials file. Noncompliant providers will be reported to the Medical Executive Committee for appropriate disciplinary action/intervention.

**6) Are there exemptions available for not receiving the flu vaccination?**

Yes, exemptions are limited to specific circumstances.

Approved exemptions will be valid only for the year in which they were requested. Exemptions for any and all future years will require completion and submission of a Vaccine Exemption Request Form (attached to the Mandatory Flu Vaccination HR Policy each year.

**7) What are the exemptions?**

Medical and Religious exemptions are available.

**Medical:** Associates, Contract Associates, Students, Volunteers and Credentialed / Authorized Providers requesting exemption will be requested to produce a physician's note related to medical contradictions. HHCS reserves the right to request that the associate or student sign a HIPAA waiver to coordinate with his/her health care provider to confirm the need for the medical exemption.

**Religious:** Any individual covered under this policy that has a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance may be exempt from the annual influenza vaccination requirement barring an undue hardship on HHCS. To seek the exemption, the said individual must submit the signed Vaccination Exemption Request Form.

See the Mandatory Influenza Vaccine Administration HR Policy for more information.

**8) When is the Vaccination Exemption Request Form due and where do I submit the form?**

**All Exemption Forms must be turned in by October 15<sup>th</sup> to the Director of Clinical Staff Development .**

**9) Do I have to wear a surgical mask if I don't receive the flu vaccination due to an approved exemption?**

Yes. All unvaccinated individuals with an approved exemption to waive the annual influenza vaccination will be required to wear a standard surgical mask (while on duty or time period providing services) beginning on the day following the Exemption Form deadline and through the end of the influenza season.

Individuals covered under this policy with an approved exemption will wear a surgical mask in all locations on Hamilton campuses at work or time while onsite providing services, securely covering their nose and mouth. Individuals with an approved exemption may remove the surgical mask to eat and/or drink.

Every department will have a stock of surgical masks, if necessary.

**10) Will I receive any designation that I have not received the flu vaccination?**

Associates, Students, Volunteers and Credentialed / Authorized Providers who DO NOT receive the vaccine will be identified by an alternate identification badge through Public Safety with the designation —**NV**” which will communicate that said Associates, Volunteers and Credentialed / Authorized Providers have not received the flu vaccine due to an approved exemption.

The approved Vaccination Exemption Request Form will be submitted to Public Safety from Associate Health or Medical Staff Services to print the updated badge and will then be issued to the individual not receiving the flu vaccination

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**11) What is the consequence if a Student does not receive the flu vaccine or provide an exemption form?**

Any Students who fail to receive a flu vaccination or obtain an approved exemption will not be allowed to participate in any clinical experiences at Hamilton Medical Center or any of their affiliates.