



State of Louisiana
Department of Health and Hospitals
Office of the Secretary

Dear Colleague:

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals is asking for your help in encouraging your patients and employees to get the vaccines for 2009 H1N1 and seasonal influenza. As part of an effort to educate the public on the importance of vaccinations, we announced yesterday that Governor Bobby Jindal has proclaimed this week (January 10-16) Influenza Immunization Week in Louisiana, in conjunction with the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Influenza Vaccination Week.

We also updated the status of the state's Fight the Flu campaign yesterday, announcing that nearly 300,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine had been administered across the state. Though that is an encouraging number, as we enter the traditional flu season, the number of people receiving the vaccine has declined, according to the CDC.

As health care providers, you play a crucial role in addressing your patients' concerns about the vaccinations' safety. Encouraging those who trust your practice, especially those with chronic illnesses, to receive the vaccine could help prevent serious illness and death. During this week, we hope you help spread this important health message, whether through printed materials (attached), special clinics, e-mails, phone calls or other efforts.

Throughout the week, DHH will work with program offices, providers and health care organizations to raise awareness of the importance of receiving influenza vaccinations. Each day will focus on a specific population as indicated by the CDC. Tuesday will focus on those with chronic illnesses such as asthma, obesity and heart disease; Wednesday on children, pregnant women, and parents and caregivers of infants; Thursday on young adults from 19 to 24 years of age; and Friday on senior citizens.

Please help us encourage Louisiana residents to protect against 2009 H1N1 and seasonal influenza by getting vaccinated. You play a crucial role in communicating with patients and health care workers throughout the state and we are grateful for you efforts. More information can be found at www.FightTheFluLA.com. And for more information about the National Influenza Vaccination Week and how you can get involved in this event, visit the NIVW Web site at www.flu.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy Guidry, M.D.".

Jimmy Guidry, M.D.
State Health Officer/DHH Medical Director