



# ANNUAL FLU VACCINATIONS: VITAL TO PUBLIC HEALTH

## LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW SERIES: 2020 PUBLIC HEALTH SPOTLIGHT

### Introduction

#### ABOUT THE FLU: YOUNG CHILDREN AND OLDER ADULTS

The CDC estimates that the 2018-2019 flu season resulted in up to 42.9 million illnesses, 647,00 hospitalizations, and 61,200 deaths.<sup>1</sup> Among the most vulnerable to serious illness or death from the flu are children under the age of five and adults aged 65 years and older. CDC also estimates there was an increase nationally in flu vaccinations among these populations from the 2017-2018 flu season to the 2018-2019 flu season.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

While effectiveness varies, recent studies show vaccination reduces the risk of flu by 40 to 60 percent.<sup>5</sup> Getting the annual flu vaccine not only reduces the risk of illness and death, but also lowers the risk of hospitalization and time away from school or work. For these and a variety of other public health-related reasons, the CDC recommends an annual flu vaccination for anyone over the age of six months.

### BY THE NUMBERS

#### Flu Vaccine Seasonal Rates

(SOURCE: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION<sup>2,3,4</sup>)

#### CHILDREN

Up to age 4

2020 Goal

**70%**

2018-2019 Flu Season

National estimate

**73.4%**

Range among states

**87.7% to 51.1%**

2017-2018 Flu Season

National estimate

**67.8%**

Range among states

**83.3% to 53.3%**

#### OLDER ADULTS

Age 65 and older

2020 Goal

**70%**

2018-2019 Flu Season

National estimate

**68.1%**

Range among states

**75.5% to 58.4%**

2017-2018 Flu Season

National estimate

**59.6%**

Range among states

**72.6% to 45.1%**

### Legislative Trends

#### Information and Public Education

When it comes to the flu and flu vaccines, education is critical to an effective public health strategy. With young children and older adults facing greater risks from seasonal flu, many states require that information about the flu and the flu vaccine be distributed by child care and adult residential facilities. In states that have adopted these requirements by law, the state health agency is often directed to develop information and materials.

#### CHILD CARE FACILITIES

Nine states have enacted laws requiring day care centers, nurseries, and preschools to provide information about the flu and flu vaccine to parents and caregivers. These laws require annual distribution of educational material, typically in late summer or early fall. Content varies among states. Kansas and Tennessee require information about the benefits of the flu vaccine, while other states, such as Florida and Massachusetts require the dissemination of information about flu causes, symptoms and transmission. Louisiana and Mississippi go a step further and require materials to include information about the availability and accessibility of the flu vaccine.

Most of these states direct their health agencies to develop or publish material for distribution as a way to ensure the information is based on sound public health practices. While no studies have examined the impact of these requirements, CDC data indicates a general increase in flu vaccination rates among young children in these states.<sup>6</sup>

#### ADULT RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

Since 2015, eight states have enacted laws requiring people in adult residential facilities, such as assisted living facilities, retirement communities, and nursing homes, to receive information about the flu and the flu vaccine. A Michigan law enacted in 2000 also requires that facilities assist residents in obtaining the flu vaccine. State health agencies are often tasked to develop materials for adult residential facilities as well.

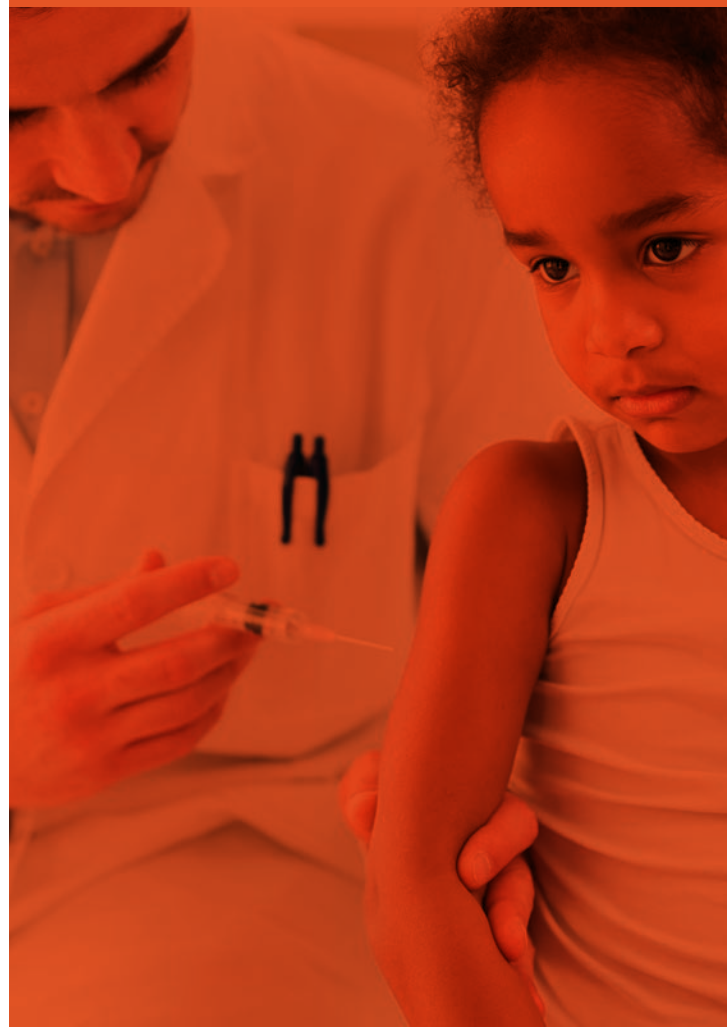
## Looking Ahead

ASTHO expects more states to adopt laws aimed at reducing the impact of flu among young children and older adults. In addition to requirements regarding education and information, foreseeable state legislative action includes new policies that would:

- **Allow pharmacists to administer flu vaccines to children.**
- **Require children attending child care facilities to receive annual flu vaccinations.**
- **Require employees of child care and adult residential facilities to receive annual flu vaccinations.**

# 9 STATES

**HAVE ENACTED LAWS THAT REQUIRE DAY CARE CENTERS, NURSERIES, AND PRESCHOOLS TO PROVIDE FLU AND FLU VACCINE INFORMATION TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS.**



1. Xu X, Blanton L, Elal AI, et al. Update: Influenza Activity in the United States During the 2018–19 Season and Composition of the 2019–20 Influenza Vaccine. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2019;68:544–551. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6824a3>. Accessed on Jan. 7, 2020.
2. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “Flu Vaccination Coverage, United States, 2018–19 Influenza Season.” Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/1718season.htm>. Accessed Jan. 7, 2020.
3. CDC. “Estimates of Flu Vaccination Coverage among Children – United States, 2017–18 Flu Season.” Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/coverage-1718estimates-children.htm>. Accessed Jan. 7, 2020.
4. CDC. “Estimates of Influenza Vaccination Coverage among Adults—United States, 2017–18 Flu Season.” Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/coverage-1718estimates.htm>. Accessed Jan. 7, 2020.
5. CDC. “Frequently Asked Influenza (Flu) Questions: 2019–2020 Season.” Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2019-2020.htm>. Accessed Nov. 14, 2019.
6. CDC. “2010–11 through 2018–19 Influenza Seasons Vaccination Coverage Trend Report.” Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/reportshtml/trends/index.html>. Accessed Nov. 19, 2019.


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**ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND TERRITORIAL HEALTH OFFICIALS**

**Headquarters:**  
2231 Crystal Drive, Suite 450  
Arlington, VA 22202

**Regional Office:**  
600 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 1000  
Atlanta, GA 30308

 (202) 371-9090

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