

Date: October 28, 2015
From: The National Partnership Council
Subj: NPC Endorsement of Influenza Vaccination
To: All VHA Employees

Each year within the United States, influenza causes significant illness, resulting in thousands of hospitalizations and many deaths. The National Partnership Council (NPC), including AFGE, NAGE, NFFE, SEIU, and NNU and Management representatives, recognizes the importance of influenza vaccination as a significant step for all health care personnel (HCP), including paid employees, volunteers, and trainees, to protect our members, our Veteran patients, and others within the VHA community.

To combat influenza, all VHA facilities have robust influenza vaccination campaigns, focusing on prevention and treatment for both staff and patients. As a VHA employee, you have a significant role to play in preventing the spread of influenza by promoting vaccination and other mitigation strategies that strengthen a culture of safety and health within all VHA facilities. Getting vaccinated against influenza remains the best protection against the flu. VHA leadership, the Office of Public Health, and the NPC urge all who may safely get a vaccination to get one in the spirit of a culture of safety. VHA, as the Nation's premier health care system, can achieve high rates of employee vaccine uptake through voluntary flu vaccination. Get vaccinated to protect yourself, your colleagues, and Veteran patients. Only through your commitment to get your flu shot annually can VHA meet The Joint Commission standard that calls for healthcare facilities to achieve a 90% staff vaccination rate by 2020.

Of course, vaccination is one part of a comprehensive program to improve safety for all by decreasing the amount of influenza in our VA community. In addition to receiving vaccination, NPC encourages all VHA employees to promote and practice all other powerful mitigation strategies that prevent flu among colleagues, patients, and visitors. These include:

- cleaning hands often;
- covering coughs and sneezes; and
- staying home when sick.

We know, recognize, and appreciate that most employees do routinely get vaccinated - THANK YOU! If you get vaccinated outside of VA, we encourage you to let your employee health unit know you've been vaccinated. Sharing this information helps VHA to measure rates of vaccination among HCP within facilities.

NPC recognizes that vaccination is not currently mandated by VHA. We strongly support this decision and encourage members who have no conditions to voluntarily get a free vaccination from VA or from any provider during this flu season. The NPC will continue to work in collaboration with VHA and the Office of Public Health to promote vaccine uptake and provide strong support to the VA's influenza vaccination and prevention campaigns, and we ask that all employees do the same. Again, we thank you for your continued dedication to protecting your own health, the health of our Veterans and of those within our VHA communities.



Alma L. Lee, President AFGE NVAC
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