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TO: Massachusetts School Administrators, School Nurses, and Educators

FROM: Pejman Talebian, MA, MPH, Director, Immunization Program
Susan M. Lett, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Immunization Program

DATE: August 2013

RE: New Influenza Education Requirement

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) would like to inform all Massachusetts schools and early education providers that legislation, [An Act Relative to Immunization Awareness](#), (MGL c.111, § 229) is effective this year which requires all elementary and secondary schools and all providers of early education to distribute to parents and guardians information regarding the benefits of annual influenza vaccination for children 6 months to 18 years of age. This information shall include the causes and symptoms of the disease, how it is spread, how to obtain additional information regarding the disease, and the effectiveness and risks of vaccination.

Distribution of the attached flyer, [The Flu: A Guide for Parents](#), will meet the requirements of this new legislation. The flyer is also available at www.mass.gov/flu. We encourage you to distribute this to parents through all normal channels of communication, including sending it home with students, email, newsletters, and posting it on your website.

Please keep in mind that flu season is unpredictable and even during mild seasons influenza can cause illness and even death for thousands of people in the United States. It also causes a substantial amount of missed school among students, faculty, and staff. The single best way to prevent influenza is vaccination of everyone six months of age and older.

Generating Revenue from School Flu Clinics:

- UMass Medical School's Commonwealth Medicine Center for Health Care Financing works with health plans to provide reimbursement for the administration of state-supplied flu vaccine to children in schools. Schools and local health departments that participate in this program will be reimbursed for the costs of administering state-supplied flu vaccine to health plan members. In addition, health plans have agreed to provide reimbursement for the cost of privately-purchased influenza vaccine for individuals aged 19 years and older.

For more information about this opportunity to generate revenue for your school, please visit the Commonwealth Medicine website at <http://commed.umassmed.edu/flu-reimb>, email vaccine.reimbursement@umassmed.edu or call 800-890-2986.

- School districts can also become MassHealth providers for the purpose of administering flu vaccine to children. MassHealth has waived the application fee for schools and local health departments and is encouraging schools to apply. For more information about the MassHealth Flu Vaccine Program, please visit www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/newsroom/masshealth/providers/mh-flu-vaccine-program.html.

Resources:

The following resources can help you prevent flu in schools and assist with communication with parents:

- **The Flu Guide for Parents** www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/cdc/flu/the-flu-guide-for-parents.pdf (distribution of this flyer meets the new influenza education requirement)
- **Flu Information for School Administrators, School Nurses and Teachers** www.mass.gov/eohhs/provider/guidelines-resources/services-planning/diseases-conditions/influenza/specific-groups/information-for-school-and-childcare-professionals.html
- **School-Based Flu Vaccination Clinics** www.mass.gov/eohhs/provider/guidelines-resources/services-planning/diseases-conditions/influenza/school-flu-clinics.html

For the most up-to-date information concerning influenza and additional resources, please check the MDPH flu web site at www.mass.gov/flu or call 617-983-6800.

We look forward to working with you to keep students and staff healthy and in class in the coming school year!