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NEWS RELEASE



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ANA Urges Registered Nurses to Get the Seasonal Influenza Vaccine *Supports Comprehensive Prevention Plan*

SILVER SPRING, MD – Recognizing the important role vaccination of health care workers plays in a comprehensive seasonal influenza prevention plan, the American Nurses Association (ANA) continues to urge all registered nurses to get vaccinated every year to protect themselves, their families, and the patients they serve.

The 2010-2011 influenza vaccine will protect against three different influenza viruses: an H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the H1N1 virus that caused widespread illness last season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get an influenza vaccine during this influenza season.

In response to last year's H1N1 pandemic, many facilities and state governments have considered imposing mandatory influenza vaccination requirements for health care workers. ANA does not support such policies unless they adhere to certain guidelines to ensure they are fair, equitable and nondiscriminatory.

“ANA believes that immunization of nurses is an important component of a comprehensive prevention plan for seasonal influenza,” said ANA President Karen A. Daley, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN. “However, we also need to protect the rights of nurses to ensure that they are treated fairly and have the necessary workplace protections.”

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ANA believes mandatory seasonal influenza vaccination policies should only be implemented under these conditions:

- The mandatory policy comes from the highest level of legal authority, ideally state government
- Suitable exemptions, such as for those allergic to components of the vaccine, are included
- Discriminating against or disciplining nurses who choose not to participate is prohibited
- The policy is part of a comprehensive infection control program that includes personal protective equipment, such as N95 respirators, to increase safety
- Vaccinations are free and provided at convenient times and locations to foster compliance
- The employer negotiates with worker union representatives to resolve any differences when the policy is implemented at a health care facility

ANA's protection of nurses' workplace rights should not be confused with the message ANA is delivering to nurses: Get the seasonal influenza vaccination. To promote vaccination, ANA is sending a letter to its members and to affiliated specialty nursing organizations encouraging immunization for seasonal influenza.

Noting that the seasonal influenza vaccination rate for nurses and all health care workers consistently remains below 50 percent, ANA President Daley said, "We know nurses can contract and transmit seasonal influenza. As the most trusted profession, we owe it to ourselves, our patients and the public to be vaccinated and set the example we want the nation to follow."

More information about immunization is available through ANA's *Bringing Immunity to Every Community* project. The two-year initiative, a cooperative agreement between ANA and CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, focuses on maximizing nurses' role in increasing vaccination rates and reducing incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases. Please visit the Web site, <http://www.ANAimmunize.org>

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The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent member nurses associations, its organizational affiliates, and its workforce advocacy affiliate, the Center for American Nurses. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.