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MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 13, 2026

TO: Hospitals, Ambulatory and Community Clinics, Medical Practices, Skilled Nursing and other Long Term Care Facilities, Dentist Offices, Chiropractic Offices, Physical Therapy Practices, and other Health Care Facilities

FROM: Timothy Peters, MD
Health Officer, Tehama County

Timothy Peters
Timothy Peters (Aug 13, 2026 14:36:38 PDT)

SUBJECT: HEALTH OFFICER ORDER NO. 26-01: Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Health Care Workers During the 2026-2027 Influenza Season

Order

Pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 120175:

- Hospitals, Ambulatory and Community Clinics, Medical Practices, Skilled Nursing and other Long Term Care Facilities, and other Health Care Facilities in Tehama County are hereby ORDERED and Dentist Offices, Chiropractic Offices, and Physical Therapy Practices are STRONGLY RECOMMENDED to implement a program requiring all health care workers providing services at the facility to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask for the duration of the 2026-2027 influenza season (defined below) while working in patient care areas in that health care facility.
- Every health care facility shall promptly provide a copy of this Order to each health care worker providing services at the facility and shall further post a copy of this Order in a prominent and accessible location in the facility for the duration of the 2026-2027 influenza season.

Background and Reasons for the Order

I am again issuing a Health Officer order mandating that all health care facilities in Tehama County require their health care workers (HCWs) to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask during the influenza season.

Influenza is a highly communicable disease that always exists in our community at varying levels. Influenza infection rates and the severity of influenza symptoms increase markedly during the winter months, commonly known as "flu season." This seasonal influenza increase necessitates additional measures to be taken during those months to prevent the spread of the disease.

Preliminary estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the 2025-2026 influenza season estimated that in the United States there were 390,000-800,000 flu hospitalizations and 24,000 – 81,000 flu related deaths. A significant majority of these deaths occurred in people > 65 years of age. HCWs are both at risk for influenza and can transmit the virus to their vulnerable patients. Influenza outbreaks have occurred on a yearly basis in Tehama County. Many patients in our County receive yearly influenza vaccination, but unfortunately some of their health care workers choose not to receive the influenza vaccine. This has led to direct transmission from unimmunized health care workers to additional patients.

Annual influenza vaccination is associated with a reduced incidence of influenza in adults and children. Influenza vaccinated individuals that sustain breakthrough influenza infection have lower mortality and reduced disease severity. Acquisition of influenza in HCWs results in disruption of health care. Since influenza infection in staff and patients during the flu season is common (ranging between 25 and 80 percent), influenza vaccine is cost effective and has been shown to reduce absenteeism. Health care facility influenza outbreaks have been responsible for significant morbidity and mortality in nursing homes and other long-term facilities. These problems can be reduced by influenza vaccination. According to the CDC the flu vaccine is safe and effective, and the benefits of getting vaccinated outweigh the minimal risks. All United States professional societies and government guidelines specifically recommend that patients with hen's egg allergy can receive any age-appropriate influenza vaccine, including egg-based vaccines.

State law only requires that general acute care hospitals and certain employers offer influenza vaccinations to employees. If hospital employees decline vaccination, they are only required to sign a declination statement in lieu of vaccination. (Health & Safety Code, §1288.7, subdivision (a); California Code of Regulations, title 8, § 5199, subdivision (c)(6)(D) and (h)(10).) While compliance rates with these laws are high, actual HCW vaccination rates are not and may fall below that which would reduce the spread of infection. Mandatory vaccination or masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to >95%.

Our goals are to increase rates of influenza vaccination in HCWs, reduce employee absenteeism during influenza season, lower HCW to patient transmission of influenza, and minimize the risk of hospitalization and intensive care unit admissions.

Facilities Subject to the Order

This order applies to hospitals, ambulatory and community clinics, skilled nursing and other long-term care facilities, and any other health care facility.

Definition of HCWs

For the purposes of this order, “health care workers” or “HCWs” are persons, paid and unpaid, working in health care settings who have direct patient contact or who work in patient care areas.

Duration of Order

This Order applies to the 2026-2027 influenza season unless rescinded. The influenza season is defined as November 1, 2026, to March 31, 2027. If influenza surveillance data demonstrate an unusually late peak and continued widespread influenza activity in the spring, I may issue a subsequent order extending the period during which the masking program shall apply.

Compliance

Compliance with this Order is **mandatory** for all health care facilities in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Tehama County. Violation may result in civil enforcement or criminal penalties under Division 105 and/or Division 112 of the Health and Safety Code.

If a health care worker receives their influenza vaccination after November 1st, the health care worker will need to wear a mask for two weeks after their immunization while antibodies develop in the body.

Your help and support are appreciated in protecting the residents of Tehama County. For any additional questions or if you have any objections to this Order, please contact the Tehama County Health Services Agency Public Health Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Program at 530.527.6824.

cc: Board of Supervisors
Gabriel Hydrick