PURPOSE

To establish standards for influenza immunization and infection prevention practices that are consistently communicated and enforced throughout Allegiance Health in order to provide a safe healthy environment for staff, patients and visitors and model healthy behaviors for our community.

POLICY

Beginning January 1, 2013 and prior to the onset of Influenza Season annually thereafter, prior to September 30th, all Allegiance Health Staff will do one of the following:

1) Receive influenza vaccine(s) provided by Allegiance Health; or
2) Provide written proof of receipt of the required influenza vaccine(s) from another source; or
3) Be approved for an exemption and abide by approved infection prevention practices during each Influenza Season.

DEFINITIONS

Allegiance Health Staff: For the purposes of this policy includes, but is not limited to: any person classified as medical staff, employee, contractor, student or volunteer of Allegiance Health.

Influenza Season: The period of time during which influenza is active in the community will be determined each year by hospital infection control in consultation with local public health officials. The period will start no later than October 1st, and end no sooner than March 30th each year. The period may begin earlier or extend longer during certain years. Different levels of influenza activity may require different levels of infection prevention practices as determined by Allegiance Health Infection Prevention Department.

Designated Exemption Committee: Allegiance Health in its sole discretion, will designated a committee responsible for reviewing and approving requests for an “Exemption” from the annual influenza vaccination requirements on the basis of medical or religious reasons. Membership of this committee includes, but is not limited to, representatives from the following departments of Allegiance Health: Infection Prevention, Pastoral Care, and Human Resources.

RATIONALE

The reduction of risks associated with influenza is consistent with Allegiance Health’s role as a community leader in conjunction with the mission statement:

We lead our community to better health and well-being at every stage of life.

By having our staff vaccinated against influenza, we continue to promote a culture of patient safety by helping to prevent hospital acquired influenza transmission to patients and visitors, as well as protecting staff against workplace transmission. On February 24, 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) expanded the recommendations for influenza vaccine to everyone age six months and older. The new recommendation seeks to remove barriers to influenza immunization and signals the importance of preventing influenza across the entire population.
Vaccination of Allegiance Health staff will also promote employee safety and health by reducing workplace absenteeism due to influenza illness.

**SCOPE**

A. The Influenza Immunization policy applies to all persons providing service for Allegiance Health, including employees, medical staff, students, volunteers, contractors, and subcontractors, regardless of age.

B. Prior to the onset of Influenza Season annually, no later than September 30th, all Allegiance Health Staff will do one of the following:
   1) Receive influenza vaccine(s) provided by Allegiance Health; or
   2) Provide written proof of receipt of the required influenza vaccine(s) from another source; or
   3) Receive approval for an exemption and abide by approved infection prevention practices during each Influenza Season.

C. New staff will be required to do the following fourteen (14) days prior to first day of work, if the new staff member’s date of hire/appointment falls within the Influenza Season:
   1) Receive influenza vaccine(s) provided by Allegiance Health; or
   2) Provide written proof of receipt of the required influenza vaccine(s) from another source; or
   3) Receive approval for an exemption and abide by approved infection prevention practices during each Influenza Season.

D. New staff joining the organization outside of this period will be notified of the policy and will be expected to comply with the Immunization Policy the next Influenza Season.

E. Staff members receiving influenza vaccine(s) from a source other than Allegiance Health may or may not receive reimbursement. Reimbursement to staff members for the cost of receiving influenza vaccine(s) from a source other than Allegiance Health will be at the sole discretion of Allegiance Health.

**EXEMPTION**

A. Staff members requesting an “Exemption” review must complete an Exemption Form by December 1, 2012 this calendar year and by September 1st annually thereafter.

B. Staff meeting the medical contraindications set forth by the ACIP/CDC (and listed below) may be granted an exemption from annual influenza vaccination. For exemptions based upon medical contraindication, an Exemption Form must be completed and signed by a licensed health care provider and submitted to Employee Health. This document will then be reviewed by the Designated Exemption Review Committee, or assigned designee and a determination of exemption will be made. Medical contraindications include:
1. A prior severe allergic reaction to the influenza vaccine, regardless of the component suspected to be responsible for the reaction. Documentation from a licensed health care provider is required.

2. A history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome within six weeks following a previous dose of influenza vaccine is considered to be a precaution for use of influenza vaccines. The employee and his or her primary health care provider should consider whether it is safe to proceed with vaccination and provide the appropriate documentation.

C. Exemptions may also be allowed on the basis of a sincerely held religious belief or creed. For exemptions based upon a sincerely held religious belief or creed, an Exemption Form must be completed and submitted to Employee Health with a note from the employee’s religious leader. These documents will then be reviewed by the Designated Exemption Review Committee or assigned designee, and exemption determination will be made.

D. During their review, the Designated Exemption Review Committee will determine the period/expiration date for each approved exemption. Individuals with approved exemptions will not be required to re-submit exemption documentation until their current exemption expires.

E. All persons with approved exemptions to vaccination must sign and provide written documentation stating that he/she will abide by approved infection control practices during Influenza Season as determined by Infection Prevention.

   1. During high levels of influenza activity, Infection Prevention may require unvaccinated staff to wear masks while on duty or be furloughed until the risk has decreased.

   2. Names of persons with exemptions will be provided to the workers’ supervisors and managers, including department leadership.

COMPLIANCE

A. Allegiance Health will set the relevant dates of the anticipated Influenza Season each year in consultation with local and or state public health officials. In general, influenza season typically extends from October to March, but can start earlier or extend longer in certain years. Different levels of influenza activity may require different infection control practices throughout the Influenza Season.

B. All Allegiance staff, associates, physicians, contractors and volunteers are responsible for complying with, and ensuring that other staff, associates, physicians, contractors, and volunteers comply with this policy and the Allegiance mission statement.

C. In case of vaccine shortage, influenza vaccine provided by Allegiance Health will be prioritized to staff based on recommendations from Infection Prevention in consultation with local and or state public health officials.
D. During high levels of influenza activity, Infection Prevention may require unvaccinated staff to wear masks while on duty.

E. Allegiance Health Staff who have not received required influenza vaccine(s), provided proof of influenza immunization from another source, or who have not been granted an exemption prior to January 1, 2013 and in subsequent years, prior to the onset of Influenza Season will be considered in violation of this policy. Unvaccinated (exempt) staff members failing to abide by approved infection prevention practices during Influenza Season as determined by Infection Prevention will be considered in violation of this policy.

F. Allegiance Health Staff in violation of this policy will be considered unfit for duty. Staff in violation will be notified by their Manager or designee and will not be allowed to work (unpaid time) until compliance with the policy has been achieved. The employee will also receive an initial or additional step in the Corrective Action process according to the Corrective Action Policy. If compliance is not achieved within 2 weeks of notification, their employment may be terminated.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES

A multi-disciplinary committee was established to develop, implement, and monitor initiatives to promote a safe and healthy environment with regard to influenza immunization. A primary goal of the committee is to annually review the policy and to make recommendations to administrative and medical staff regarding initiatives to minimize the risks of influenza. Ongoing reviews will include evaluation of process, outcome and sustainability.

Any staff member involved with non-compliance issues related to influenza immunization or infection prevention practices, must complete and On-line MIDAS Improvement Report.

The Safety Committee will review influenza immunization issues brought to their attention through Online Incident Reporting.

References:

- Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), CDC: 1997
- National Patient Safety Foundation (NPSF): 2009
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): 2010
- American Public Health Association (APHA): 2010
- Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA): 2010
- Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA): 2010
- Association for Professionals in Infection Control & Epidemiology, Inc. (APIC): 2011
- American Hospital Association (AHA): 2011
- Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH)
Allegiance Health Policy and Procedures

Section: Infection Control and Prevention
Scope: Allegiance Health
Policy Name: Influenza Immunization Policy
Number: IC.02.04.01
Date: August 2012

Approval(s):

1. Signature on File  Date: 8-3-12
   Karen Chaprnka, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

2. Signature on File  Date: 8-3-12
   Cheryl Lamborn, Vice President Human Resources and SPOC

Author(s):
Influenza Immunization Committee, June 2012
   Amy Schultz, MD
   Susan Lee, RN
   Vivak Kak, MD
   Carrie Fransted
   Thomas Crampton, PharmD
   Rhonda Bunce
   Vicki Lorencen
   Stevie Huffman, MSN, RN