

BULLETIN

Flu shot program: Guidelines for HSA members

November 8, 2006

Once again, the Provincial Health Officer has issued a copy of the Facility Influenza Immunization Policy to all health employers in BC. The policy states:

As a critical component of patient care, all facilities are required to adopt a written policy advocating staff influenza immunization. Staff who choose not to be immunized must be made aware that they can be excluded from work in the event of an influenza outbreak within their facility.

HSA supports the goals of the flu-shot program ... that is, to reduce the risk of infection to vulnerable patients in health care facilities. The policy states the vaccination will be provided to health care workers free of charge, and HSA takes the position that employers must provide opportunities for immunization on work time.

The Health Science Professional Bargaining Association contract is clear on this issue. Article 6.01 states:

- a. An employee may be required by the employer at the request of and at the expense of the employer
 - ii. to take skin tests, x-ray examination, vaccination, inoculation and other immunization (with the exception of a rubella vaccination when the employee is of the opinion that a pregnancy is possible) unless the employees physician has advised in writing that such a procedure may have an adverse affect on the employees health.

The employer must have a legitimate medical reason for requiring immunization. While employers often attempt to find alternate work if possible, health care workers who refuse the vaccination can be sent home without pay in the event that the Public Health Officer declares a flu outbreak at a facility.

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