BULLETIN

DATE: December 13, 2019

PLEASE POST

Health Employers drop punitive measures of employee flu vaccine policy

* updated December 13, 2019 to clarify that under the amended policy, it is still mandatory to report vaccination status, but no longer mandatory to wear a mask if not vaccinated.

After years of controversy surrounding the province's "vaccinate or mask" policy for health care workers during the flu season, the provincial policy has been amended to remove the disciplinary portion of the policy, where health care workers were at risk of being fired if they did not get a flu shot.

The Provincial Health Officer, Bonnie Henry, said the new policy will be in place effective today, Wednesday, December 4.

Under the new policy, "…health care staff and physicians will still be expected to either be immunized against influenza or wear a mask as appropriate in patient care areas. However, no longer will unvaccinated employees or physicians face discipline for failing to wear masks at all times in patient care areas. Reporting of immunization status remains mandatory."

HSA President Val Avery welcomed the change in the policy.

"HSA's position has long been that education and awareness about the benefits of immunization for health care workers, and access to worksite immunization clinics is a far better approach than the heavy-handed punitive policy in place since 2012," Avery said.

Under the revised policy, it is still expected that employees either provide their employer with proof that they have had the annual flu shot, or wear a mask when in patient care areas for the duration of the flu season when in patient care areas.