

January 13, 2010

**VACCINATION OF NON-VA FEDERAL HEALTH CARE
AND EMERGENCY SUPPORT STAFF**

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes policy for the provision of vaccinations of non-VA Federal employees with health care and emergency medical duties.

2. BACKGROUND

a. In an Executive Decision Memo dated December 2008, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) accepted a request by the White House Homeland Security Council, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security to vaccinate a targeted group of non-VA Federal employees in the event of a pandemic. There are approximately 3 million persons in the Federal work force. It is estimated that VA will vaccinate as many as 180,000 non-VA Federal employees as part of this program. Maintenance of the health of this group is essential for the continued efficient operation of the Federal government.

b. VA is the Nation's largest health care provider and its health care assets can be found in all 50 states and a number of territories. While the primary focus of VHA is the provision of comprehensive health care to its beneficiaries, VA is in a unique position to provide support during a national emergency.

c. **Program Support**

(1) A total of \$40.76 million dollars has been received through a supplemental appropriation by VA and distributed to Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to support the additional administrative, personnel, personal protective equipment, and other costs associated with the response to the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic. A portion of these funds should be used to ensure the success of this program. This may include the cost of additional Occupational Health or other health care staff to administer and document vaccination services.

(2) The VHA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards has created the VHA H1N1 Coordination Center to support this program. The purpose of the Coordination Center is to facilitate communications between VHA facilities and non-VA Federal Departments and agencies. The Coordination Center will serve as a "one-stop" location for all questions about this program.

(3) VA has advertised the option for vaccination of non-VA Federal employees at occupational risk of 2009 H1N1 infection (i.e., health care providers and emergency medical services personnel) at multiple national briefings attended by the pandemic influenza coordinators for each major Department/Agency and on the VA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards Web site, www.publichealth.va.gov/h1n1flu.

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3. POLICY: It is VHA policy to provide vaccination services to non-VA Federal employees who are hands-on health care providers, emergency support service providers, or handle potentially infectious clinical specimens containing the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. **NOTE:** *Non-VA Federal employees are eligible for vaccination through VA only if these duties are part of their work as a Federal employee. Persons who solely serve as a health care or emergency support services provider outside of their Federal occupations (e.g., volunteer firefighters in the community) are not eligible for this program.*

4. ACTION

a. **VHA H1N1 Coordination Center.** The VHA H1N1 Coordination Center is responsible for:

- (1) Overall program development, implementation and oversight.
- (2) Ensuring non-VA Departments and lead Agency offices are aware of the program.
- (3) Ensuring that application packets are complete and processed in a timely manner.
- (4) Transferring names, demographic and contact information from application packages into the Occupational Health Record System (OHRS) (pre-approval).
- (5) Estimating the number of pre-approved non-VA Federal employees potentially seeking vaccination from specific VHA medical centers and communicating these estimates to the medical centers.
- (6) Communicating details of this program to non-VA Federal employees and their Departments and Agencies.
- (7) Communicating the location, dates and time of vaccine availability to non-VA Federal employees enrolled in the program.
 - (a) The closest VA vaccination locations will be determined for pre-approved potential vaccinees (vaccinees who have had a medical record created in OHRS) using geographic information systems analysis.
 - (b) Pre-approved non-VA Federal employees will be provided with a list of the three closest VA vaccination locations and VA medical centers will be provided with an estimate of the number of non-VA Federal employees expected to seek vaccination services at their facilities. Facilities will use these estimates to plan how, when, and where vaccination services will be provided to non-VA Federal employees. **NOTE:** *The VHA H1N1 Coordination Center will compile the location(s), dates and times for vaccination for all VHA facilities. This information will be available to non-VA Federal employees through the VHA H1N1 Coordination Center.*

b. **VISN Directors.** VISN Directors are responsible for:

(1) Considering the potentially disproportionate costs incurred by individual medical centers for this program when distributing pandemic influenza supplemental funds.

(2) Coordinating the redistribution of medical materials, including vaccine, between network medical centers to prevent shortages.

c. **Facility Director.** The facility Director is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring questions regarding the program are directed to the Coordination Center.

(2) Providing accessible and efficient vaccination services to targeted non-VA Federal employees enrolled in the program.

(a) Non-VA Federal employees will be vaccinated in accordance with standard medical practices, including the provision of a vaccine information statement to each potential vaccinee.

(b) Non-VA Federal employees will be provided with a completed 2009 H1N1 vaccination card (paper vaccination cards are supplied in the ancillary vaccine kit).

(c) A subset of those vaccinated will receive a follow-up call asking about any potentially adverse reactions to vaccination.

(d) Facilities may provide post-vaccination care to non-VA Federal employees only in an emergency situation occurring shortly after vaccination (i.e., an immediate reaction to the vaccination). **NOTE:** *The authority for this care is Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1784.*

(e) VA has no authority to provide care to non-VA Federal employees who become ill after leaving the facility. Non-VA Federal employees must be instructed to seek follow-up from their primary care provider for concerns that arise after vaccination. Non-VA Federal employees who receive care beyond vaccination services must be charged for any emergency care provided under this authority.

(3) Communicating vaccine availability, the location(s), dates and times that vaccinations services will be available to the VHA H1N1 Coordination Center. **NOTE:** *Some medical centers may choose to host vaccination services at a CBOC or other location in addition to the medical center. Any changes in the location(s), date(s) and time(s) for vaccination services must be communicated immediately to the Coordination Center.*

(4) Documenting vaccination of non-VA Federal employees in the OHRS. If the vaccination encounter is not able to be documented OHRS around the time the service is provided, the encounter may be documented using a Microsoft Word-based form and then entered into OHRS as soon as possible. This form is available through the Coordination Center.

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d. **Non-VA Federal Departments and Agencies.** Non-VA Federal Departments and Agencies are responsible for:

(1) Ensuring employees are aware of the VA program.

(2) Identifying employees eligible for the program.

(3) Obtaining the names and required demographic and contact information of eligible employees requesting vaccination and organizing this information into the application package.

(a) Non-VA Departments and Agencies must obtain the application package from the VHA H1N1 Coordination Center.

(b) The VHA H1N1 Coordination Center will provide the non-VA Federal organization a username, password and instructions for the use of the secure file transfer protocol (FTP) site for transmitting the completed template to VA.

(4) Uploading the completed application package onto the program's secure file transfer site.

e. **Non-VA Federal Employees.** Non-VA Federal employees are responsible for:

(1) Directing their questions about the program to the Coordination Center rather than through their local VA facilities.

(2) Ensuring accurate contact and demographic information is provided in a timely manner to their Department or Agency.

(3) Making an appointment for vaccination, if requested by the medical center.

(4) Presenting to the proper location (if requested), at the proper time (if requested) and with the proper identification.

(a) Pre-approved non-VA Federal employees enrolled for vaccination will have their name and contact information available in OHRS.

(b) When a non-VA Federal employee presents to a facility for vaccination, the employee must present a valid photo government identification card (e.g., Federal ID, state issued driver's license, etc.) and the employee's name and contact information may be found pre-loaded in OHRS.

(c) To improve access to vaccination services, non-VA Federal staff who are hands-on health care providers, emergency support service providers or handle potentially infectious clinical specimens containing the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus may be vaccinated at VA facilities without the need for pre-approval, as described above (i.e., "walk-ins" are allowed).

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1. Non-VA Federal staff meeting the occupational criteria are instructed to identify VA vaccination sites, dates and times through the Coordination Center and VA internet site and must present at the appropriate time and location with a government issued photo ID.

2. VA facility staff shall determine whether the potential vaccinee meets the occupational criteria for vaccination at the VA. VA staff are responsible for creating a new record for the vaccinee in OHRS and documenting vaccination service.

3. If VA facility staff are uncertain whether a potential vaccinee is eligible for vaccination services through the VA as part of this program, the VHA H1N1 Coordination Center may be contacted for further assistance.

5. REFERENCES: Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1784.

6. RESPONSIBILITY: The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (13) is responsible for the content of this Directive. Questions may be referred to 202-461-1000.

7. RESCISSION: None. This Directive expires on January 31, 2015.

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Attachment

DISTRIBUTION: E-mailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List 1/13/2010

ATTACHMENT A

VA FORM 10-0501 - NOVEL H1N1 INFLUENZA VACCINATION



10-0501-fill.pdf

This form will be available on the VA intranet Forms web site <http://vaww4.va.gov/vaforms/> within 24 hours. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA web site not available to the public.*