



## Health Advisory

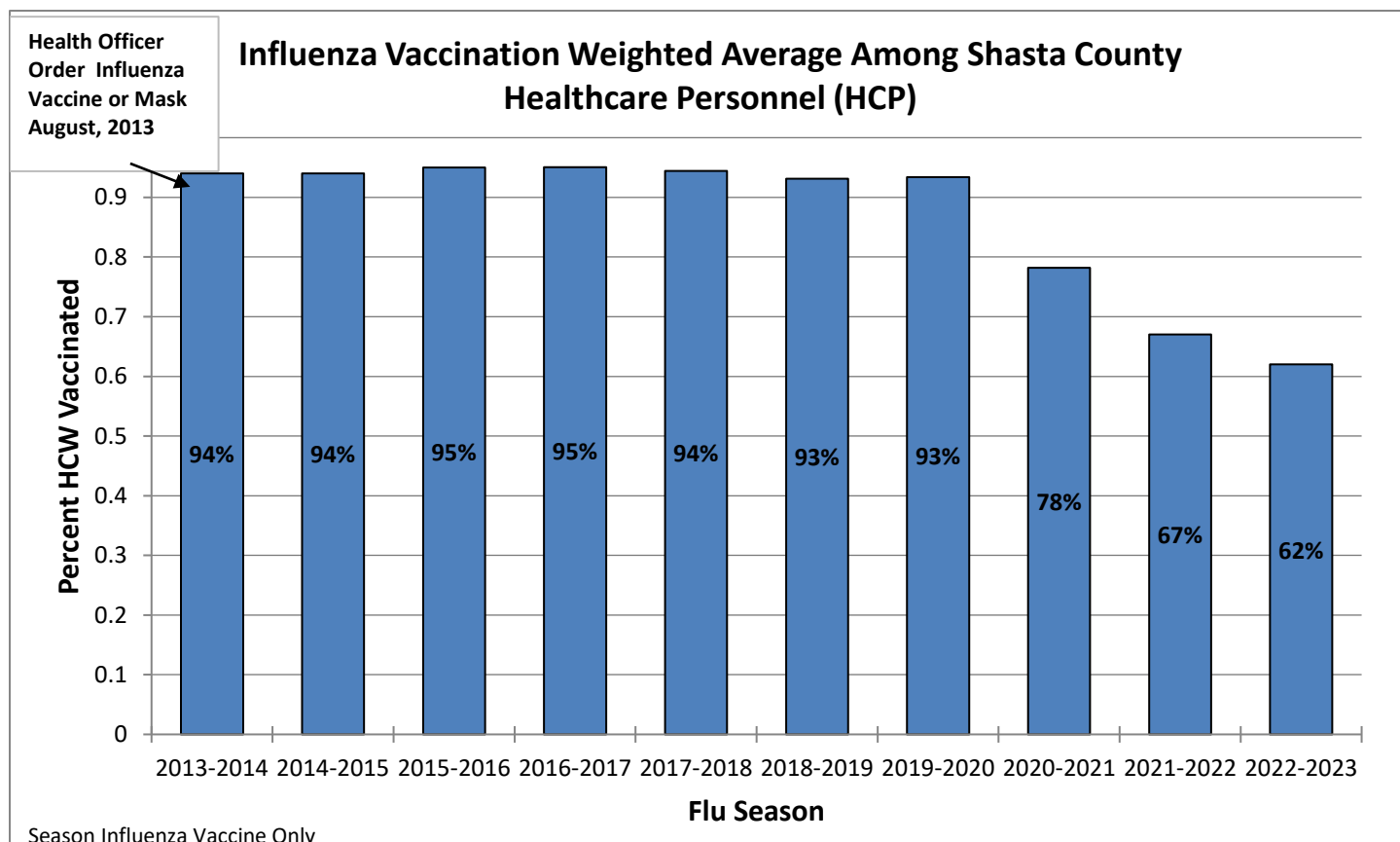
### Flu Vaccine or Mask for Health Care Workers (HCW) Update

September 29, 2023

Please distribute to all providers in your practice

This health advisory reports HCW flu vaccination outcome percentages locally from the 2022-2023 flu season. The HCW flu vaccine or mask order is on-going for 2023-2024 and all subsequent year flu seasons (November 1 through April 30 each year).

A Health Officer order was issued August 2013 and is still in place that requires all health care workers (HCW) at licensed health care facilities and ambulance services in Shasta County to receive an annual influenza vaccination. In case they decline, they must sign a declination statement and wear a mask during each influenza season while working in patient care areas. This order has shown to increase influenza vaccination rates. Similar flu vaccine policies are endorsed by numerous other jurisdictions, professional medical societies, patient safety organizations, hospitals and other health care facilities in California, and across the nation.



HCW categories include employees, licensed independent practitioners (physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners with hospital privileges), volunteers, and contractors.

“Engaging individuals, families and communities to protect and improve health and wellbeing.”

*Robin Schurig, MPH, CPH, Branch Director  
Michael Vovakes, MD, MMI, Deputy Health  
Officer [www.shastahhsa.net](http://www.shastahhsa.net)*

Following the Health Officers' order, the aggregate flu vaccine coverage for health care worker employees at all five local general acute care hospitals (Mercy, Mayers, SRMC, Vibra, and Patients') in Shasta County rose remarkably--from 70% to 94%-- in just one flu season (2012-13 to 2013-14). Flu vaccine coverage for employees at these five facilities remained at a statistically higher aggregate of 93% for 2019-20. For 2022-23, four local general acute care hospitals had an aggregate of 62%, a 16% drop from 2020-21 and a 5% drop from 2021-22. This drop might also be prevalent as patients' hospital closed in 2021.

The eight Skilled Nursing Facilities (Copper Ridge, Crestwood, Marquis, Oak River, Quartz Hill, Redding post-acute, Veterans home, and Windsor) reported a mean employee flu vaccine rate of 94% in 2019-20 but vaccine rates decreased to 75% for 2020-21 and dropped to 45% in 2021-22. However, for 2022-23 it was close to last year at 46%. Vaccination rates declined for all but Crestwood, Marquis and Quartz Post-acute as compared to last year. Marquis showed significant improvement in its employee vaccination rate and exceeded its 2021-22 flu vaccination rate of 26%, achieving 46% coverage in 2022-23. Oak River had the highest flu vaccination rate at 50% as compared all other SNF's.

The 2022-23 flu vaccination rates among health care workers declined not only locally but across the state of California compared to pre-pandemic levels. As we approach a new influenza season and ongoing unknowns regarding COVID-19, there is room for improvement in flu vaccination coverage.

### **Conclusion**

Since implementing the Shasta County HCW flu vaccine order in 2013, influenza vaccination rates across our communities' health care facilities increased significantly during the initial years. However, due to many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and thereafter, there has been a continuous significant decrease in healthcare worker influenza vaccination rates from the 2019-2020 influenza season to the 2022-23 influenza season. Providers, please make your best efforts to receive flu vaccine timely this year and to document that you have done so, protecting yourself and your family, as well as co-workers, patients, and their families. We appreciate your leadership and support in continuing this partnership to protect the residents of our community.

**This 2023-2024 flu season there are no changes to the flu vaccine or mask order.** For a review of the rationale, goals, Health Officer order, duration, required facilities, enforcement, definitions, legal authority and an FAQ regarding flu vaccine or mask in Shasta County, please visit our website at [http://www.co.shasta.ca.us/index/hhsa\\_index/Community\\_partnerships/med\\_professionals/FluVaxMed\\_Profs.aspx](http://www.co.shasta.ca.us/index/hhsa_index/Community_partnerships/med_professionals/FluVaxMed_Profs.aspx). For any additional questions, please contact Shah Raza, Epidemiology and Evaluation Supervisor, Shasta County HHS—Public Health at (530) 229-8754.

*Reporting annual vaccination rates:* Skilled nursing facilities and hospitals, please report flu vaccine rates for your employee, medical staff, contractor and volunteers to our infectious disease epidemiologist, by April 30th each year, at 229-8754 or via fax at 225-3743 or email at [sraza@co.shasta.ca.us](mailto:sraza@co.shasta.ca.us). Acute care hospitals have been required to report vaccine rates to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as part of its Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program for years.

Sincerely,  
Michael Vovakes, MD, MMI  
Deputy Health Officer,  
Shasta County

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*Robin Schurig, MPH, CPH, Branch Director  
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