



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO, M.D.
DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

For Immediate Release: August 27, 2007

07-63

LT. GOVERNOR, HEALTH DIRECTOR, SCHOOL LEADERS BUOYED BY RESPONSE TO FREE VACCINE PROGRAM

Stop Flu At School promotion ramps up amid looming deadline

HONOLULU – Lt. Governor James R. “Duke” Aiona, Jr., Health Director Chiyome Fukino, MD and Department of Education Superintendent Pat Hamamoto today reported overwhelming interest in the state’s plan to offer free seasonal flu vaccine in schools this fall. The voluntary program, *Protect Hawaii’s Keiki: Stop Flu At School* aims to reduce illness in our schools and communities by preventing the spread of influenza (flu) among school children and their families.

From October 2007 through January 2008, the Hawai`i State Department of Health will offer free seasonal flu vaccine to Hawai`i elementary and middle school children ages five to 13 at school, during the school day. Private and parochial schools are also participating in the program.

Parent/Guardian information packets are currently being distributed by participating schools. Consent forms should be returned to schools no later than September 7, 2007.

“The positive response this program has generated is a good start but more work needs to be done,” said Lt. Governor Aiona. “We encourage parents and guardians to read their information packets carefully and return their consent forms so all our keiki have the opportunity to receive free flu vaccinations.”

“Based on the pilot project in Mililani last year, I anticipated a strong response from our state’s public schools,” said Superintendent Hamamoto. “The response we’ve seen so far even exceeds my high expectations. To date, 95 percent of public schools and 73 percent of private schools have agreed to participate in this program and help protect their students and staff against flu. It’s tremendously encouraging that more than 165 thousand students, teachers and staff will have access to free flu vaccine.”

“The encouraging response from schools is important now that we’re seeing more definite signs of flu’s impact on our community,” said Dr. Fukino. “The department is aware of four pediatric hospitalizations due to complications from flu this spring and one child death. We also know that our neighbor to the east, Australia, is experiencing a severe flu season with school-age children being disproportionately affected. Although we don’t know whether our flu season will follow a similar pattern, it’s always good to be prepared. Through this program, we have an opportunity to avoid that kind of widespread illness and keep our keiki and communities healthy and flu-free.”

Information about the program for parents and caregivers is available online at www.stopfluatschool.com or by calling Aloha United Way’s 2-1-1 hotline.

####

For further information contact:
Janice Okubo
Communications Office
Department of Health
Phone: 586-4445

Travis Taylor
Senior Advisor - Communications
Lt. Governor’s Office
Phone: 586-0293

