



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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STOP FLU AT SCHOOL VACCINATION CLINICS BEGIN Program to distribute more than 97,000 doses statewide

HONOLULU – With influenza season fast approaching, the Hawai'i State Department of Health will begin administering flu vaccine to thousands of Hawai'i elementary and middle school students this week through the *Protect Hawai'i's Keiki: Stop Flu At School* program. About 340 schools are participating and more than 500 clinics are scheduled between October 2007 and January 2008.

"Children are easy targets for flu germs and are more likely to spread it to family members than almost any other group" said Health Director Dr. Chiyome Leinaala Fukino. "Preventing the spread of flu among children at school can reduce the spread of flu at home and in the community. Getting the flu vaccine is everyone's best protection against the flu."

Some 66,000 children are signed up to receive more than 88,200¹ doses of flu vaccine this fall through the program. Of participating students, 55,500 attend public schools.

An additional 8,900 teachers and school staff will receive flu vaccine, pushing the total number of doses administered over 97,000.

"Keeping kids healthy and in school helps us make progress on our academic achievement goals and influenza is a common illness that leads to many preventable school absences." said Superintendent Patricia Hamamoto. "I am encouraged that so many schools and families chose to participate in this voluntary program."

¹ Administered doses exceed the number of participating children and faculty because many children under age nine require two doses of vaccine.

Studies show that school children vaccinated against flu have fewer illnesses, fewer absences from school, and lower rates of illness in their families during flu season, compared with unvaccinated children.

“We hope to provide this service again in future years, and that this program helps remind everyone of the importance of getting their seasonal flu vaccine,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Paul Effler. “This is a great example of how the state, with the help of educators and health care providers, can make our communities stronger and healthier.”

Stop Flu At School partners include the Hawai`i State Department of Health, Hawai`i State Department of Education, Hawai`i Association of Independent Schools, and Hawai`i Catholic Schools with support from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hawai`i chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Academy of Family Physicians, Kaiser Permanente, and the Hawai`i Medical Service Association (HMSA).

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.

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