



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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STOP FLU AT SCHOOL VACCINATION CLINICS BEGIN TODAY

HONOLULU – Now in its third year, *Protect Hawai'i's Keiki: Stop Flu At School* kicked off today with thousands of Hawai'i elementary and middle school students receiving their free seasonal flu vaccine this week through the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) program. In all, 334 public, private and charter school clinics are scheduled across the state between now and December 3, 2009 and more than 68,000 students are expected to participate this year.

Last year, more than 62,000 children were vaccinated in the free and voluntary program. Additionally, more than 9,500 teachers and school staff received the flu vaccine, pushing the total number of vaccinations at school-based clinics over 71,500.

"This year more than ever, the current H1N1 pandemic has presented us with a formidable set of circumstances," said Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. "It is a credit to our public workers and private partners that in the face of this challenge they are still able to put together and carry out such a comprehensive, critical program that helps keiki across the state."

"An added benefit of this program is that by working with our partners in the private sector to develop this program we are well-positioned with respect to the H1N1 situation," continued Fukino. "The system is in place to where we can switch gears once we complete this seasonal flu program and seamlessly begin to administer H1N1 vaccine to one of our initial priority groups: Hawai'i's keiki."

(more)

Stop Flu at School Vaccination Clinics Begin

“Ensuring the health and well-being of our keiki is a top priority for the State, and providing students with free flu vaccinations is one way to protect them and their families from the seasonal flu,” said Governor Linda Lingle, who attended the flu vaccination kick off at Kalihi Kai Elementary School and proclaimed today “Influenza Vaccination Day.” “Getting a seasonal flu shot or nasal spray is a safe, common sense preventive step that all of our keiki and adults can take to protect themselves and help keep our communities healthy.”

Recent studies show school children vaccinated for flu have fewer illnesses, fewer school absences, and lower rates of illness in their families during flu season, compared with unvaccinated children.

“Our goal has always been to have kids healthy and in class as much as possible. The reduction in instructional time brought on by teacher furloughs makes that directive even more important,” said Patricia Hamamoto, superintendent of Hawai‘i public schools. “We believe the extra precautions schools are taking this year to prevent the spread of illness will pay dividends in the classroom.”

“We are pleased with the success of this program and expect it will continue as a critical component in our fight against flu,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Park. “The students and faculty participating in this program are examples of how best to protect against flu.”

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 CDC, Hawai‘i chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Family Physicians, the Hawai‘i Medical Reserve Corps, the University of Hawai‘i Nursing Program, the Hawai‘i Pacific University Nursing Program, UH Hilo Nursing Program, Kaua‘i Community College Nursing Program, Maui Community College Nursing Program, MedImmune, Sanofi Pasteur, Kaiser Permanente, and the Hawai‘i Medical Service Association (HMSA).

School-based 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination clinics are scheduled to begin in mid-November. Parental consent forms will go out to parents the week of October 19 and must be returned to the school by October 30. The DOH urges parents to look for, sign and return consent forms so their children can receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination.

Information about the Stop Flu at School program and the upcoming school-based H1N1 vaccine program is available online at www.stopfluatschool.com or by calling Aloha United Way’s 2-1-1 hotline.

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