



October 16, 2020

SNAPS/OHH In Focus: A Flu Vaccine is More Important than Ever

On behalf of the Offices of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) and HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH), we are highlighting the importance of flu vaccination to protect the health of individuals and families. The pandemic has presented significant challenges for everyone, but, [people experiencing homelessness](#) are a particularly vulnerable group for COVID-19. Further, people living with HIV or other underlying medical conditions are at [higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications](#). Mitigating the spread of respiratory illnesses is important to protecting vulnerable populations at risk of severe illness and to minimize stress on the healthcare system and other critical infrastructure responding to COVID-19.

With the flu season beginning and the unfortunate prospect that the flu and COVID-19 viruses will circulate at the same time, getting a flu vaccine can help protect provider staff and program participants from the flu. A flu vaccine this season can also help reduce the burden on our healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and save medical resources for care of COVID-19 patients.

[Use Boston Children's Hospital Vaccine Finder to find vaccine providers in your area.](#)

Vaccines can help prevent infection by some of the bacteria and viruses that can cause [pneumonia](#). An annual flu vaccination is one way to prevent pneumonia and is recommended for all persons age 6 months and older to decrease morbidity and mortality caused by flu. Program participants and provider staff should get a flu vaccine before flu viruses begin spreading as it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu. Make plans to get vaccinated early in the fall before the flu season begins. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people [get a flu vaccine by the end of October](#).

In addition to the flu vaccine, we encourage provider staff and program participants to examine whether they or their family members have fallen behind on routine immunizations and to talk a healthcare provider as soon as possible to become up to date. COVID-19 disrupted life-saving vaccinations at a global level, putting millions of children at risk for catching diseases like measles, meningitis, and whooping cough. The CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Surgeon General, and many others are working together to get children caught up on vaccines that have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccination is a highly effective, safe, and easy way to help keep children and families healthy. Provider staff can reach out to program participants to discuss the most convenient ways to get current on routine immunizations.

For more information on the flu, visit the [CDC Influenza \(Flu\)](#) page.

Thank you,

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