



MEMORANDUM

TO: Hospital Administrators, Infection Control Professionals, Laboratories, Infectious Disease Physicians, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Illinois Medical Society, and Local Health Departments

FROM: Communicable Disease Control Section
Influenza Surveillance Program

DATE: July 19, 2016

SUBJECT: 2016-2017 Influenza Sentinel Surveillance Program Participation

As the 2016-2017 influenza season approaches, we are reaching out to laboratories and medical providers in Illinois who evaluate and/or conduct testing for patients with influenza-like illness (ILI) regarding participation in virologic influenza surveillance. IDPH coordinates an influenza surveillance program in Illinois and collaborates with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the national surveillance program. This surveillance system is dependent on data and clinical specimens submitted from sentinel sites. Since you are a physician, health care facility or laboratory that either cares for patients with ILI and/or conducts virologic testing on influenza specimens, we are requesting your participation in this program. If you wish to participate, there are two options explained below; the virologic sentinel program for specimen testing and the ILINet provider reporting program.

The ILINet provider program is an online reporting system where designated providers can log in and submit weekly ILI surveillance data. The total number of ill patients seen at your practice, in addition to the number seen only for ILI by age group is tracked and entered each week. This information is reported each Tuesday by close of business in an online database. Data from ILINet are used to evaluate the current influenza season, monitor influenza activity levels, identify novel strains and outbreaks, assess public health vaccination efforts in the community, and assist in vaccine formulations for the following season.

Throughout the season, each site participating in the program will receive an emailed copy of the IDPH weekly influenza surveillance report and a final summary report at the end of the season.

To sign up for the ILINet provider program, please contact the IDPH Influenza Surveillance program by phone at 217-782-2016 or by email at dph.influenza@illinois.gov.

If you are a medical provider located within the City of Chicago, please contact the Chicago Department of Public Health's Influenza Coordinator, Enrique Ramirez at 312-746-5911 or Enrique.ramirez@cityofchicago.org to register.

The virologic sentinel surveillance program is another part of the overall influenza surveillance program in Illinois and is a laboratory surveillance system involving a number of selected submission sites. This program consists of testing clinical specimens from ILI patients provided by sentinel sites at designated IDPH laboratories. A CDC FDA-cleared Influenza RT-PCR assay is used as well as culturing and subtyping. Virologic surveillance is a vital part of the influenza surveillance system as it allows the CDC, IDPH, local health departments, and the sentinel sites to:

- ✓ Identify types of influenza circulating in Illinois.
- ✓ Aid in the development of next season's vaccine.
- ✓ Identify rare/novel Influenza A (H3N2v; H7) and B strains that may not be identified by commercial molecular assays; and
- ✓ Identify and submit specimens to CDC for antiviral susceptibility testing and identification of shifts in the virus's genetic makeup.

We ask sentinel sites who sign up for participation in this program to send at least ten specimens each week to their designated IDPH laboratory for viral testing at **no cost** to the sentinel site. Prior approval or notice is not needed for specimen submission if the site is a registered participating sentinel site. Sentinels who participate in clinical specimen testing are provided their specimen results, with an average turn-around time of three days; however, this fluctuates depending on the volume of specimens being tested in a given week. Each site will be provided influenza collection and shipping materials, at no cost to the site, that contain the following items:

- ✓ Specimen collection kits
- ✓ Submission forms
- ✓ Cold Packs
- ✓ Packaging & pre-paid mailing materials

If you are interested in participating in the Virologic Sentinel Surveillance program, please contact one of the following for additional program details or to register:

- ✓ IDPH Communicable Disease Control Section, Influenza Program at 217-782-2016 or dph.influenza@illinois.gov
- ✓ Chicago IDPH Laboratory at 312-793-4760
- ✓ Springfield IDPH Laboratory at 217-782-6562
- ✓ Carbondale IDPH Laboratory at 618-457-5131

All participating sites will receive additional, detailed specimen collection and shipping instructions from the IDPH laboratories prior to the start of the influenza season. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and future involvement in influenza surveillance. We look forward to working with you.