

Now You Can Help With...

## Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance

...In Only a Few Minutes a Week!

### What is an influenza sentinel provider?

An influenza sentinel provider conducts surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) in collaboration with the state health department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data reported by sentinel providers, in combination with other influenza surveillance data, provide a national picture of influenza virus and ILI activity in the U.S. Approximately 1900 providers in 49 states were enrolled in this network during the 2003-2004 influenza season.

### What data do sentinel providers collect? How and to whom are data reported?

Sentinel providers report the total number of patient visits each week and number of patient visits for influenza-like illness by age group (0-4 years, 5-24 years, 25-64 years,  $\geq 65$  years). These data are transmitted once a week via the Internet, a touch-tone telephone, or fax to a central data repository at CDC. Most providers report that it takes them **less than 30 minutes a week** to compile and report their data. In addition, sentinel providers can submit specimens from a subset of patients for virus isolation **free of charge**.

### Who can be an Influenza Sentinel Provider?

Providers of any specialty (e.g., family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, infectious diseases, geriatric medicine) in any type of practice (e.g., private practice, public health clinic, urgent care center, emergency room, university student health center) are eligible to be sentinel providers.

### Why Volunteer?

Influenza viruses are constantly evolving and cause substantial morbidity and mortality (approximately 36,000 deaths) almost every winter. Data from sentinel providers are critical for monitoring the impact of influenza and, in combination with other influenza surveillance data, can be used to guide prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection, and patient care. Sentinel providers receive feedback on the data submitted, summaries of regional and national influenza data, and a free subscription to CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report and Emerging Infectious Diseases journal. The most important consideration is that the data provided are critical for protecting the public's health.

**For more information on Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance, please contact Pam Duncan, upstate sentinel program coordinator, at 518/486-2938.**

