



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D.
DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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**LT. GOVERNOR, HEALTH DIRECTOR, EDUCATION LEADERS
TEAM UP TO OFFER SEASONAL FLU VACCINE IN SCHOOLS STATEWIDE**
Healthier kids, healthier communities cited as benefits

HONOLULU – Lt. Governor James R. “Duke” Aiona, Jr., Health Director Chiyome Fukino and Department of Education Superintendent Pat Hamamoto today announced an innovative partnership between the state Departments of Health and Education, Hawai`i Catholic Schools and Hawai`i Association of Independent Schools to reduce illness in our schools and communities. From October 2007 through January 2008, the Hawai`i State Department of Health will offer free seasonal flu vaccine to all Hawai`i schoolchildren ages five to 13 at school, during the school day.

“Few illnesses have as great an impact on our state’s health and economy as seasonal flu,” said Lt. Governor Aiona. “Countless school and work absences, hospitalizations, and even deaths, especially in our kupuna could be prevented with a quick injection in the arm or nasal spray vaccine. The partnership we’re announcing today between health leaders, educators, insurance companies and physicians can, in one fell swoop, make vaccinating children fast and easy for thousands of Hawai`i families.”

“Funding for the estimated \$2.5 million school-based flu vaccination program is being provided primarily by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and State of Hawai`i with additional support from organizations like HMSA.” Health Director Fukino said. “School-age

(more)

children are more likely to get influenza (flu) than almost any other group and when they do, they spread it around to their parents, grandparents, siblings and friends. This can be life-threatening to grandparents and family members with underlying health conditions. Vaccinating a child against flu not only protects the child, but also their community.”

"Last year's pilot project was extremely successful, making it natural to expand the vaccination project to more schools." Superintendent Pat Hamamoto said. "Providing free and easy access to flu vaccines for our students will mean fewer sick days and more quality time for classroom learning. This is a positive measure to protect the health of our students and communities, and I encourage our principals to schedule a vaccination clinic in each of their schools."

Nationally, schoolchildren have very high rates of influenza illness, exceeding 10 percent in most years. During the 2005-2006 influenza season, there were 15 outbreaks of influenza reported in Hawaii public schools, seven of which were confirmed as influenza with laboratory testing.

Information about the program for parents and caregivers is available online at <http://www.hawaii.gov/health/fluvaxforkids> or by calling Aloha United Way's 2-1-1 hotline. Parents will also receive more information from their schools after the summer recess.

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For further information contact:

Janice Okubo
Communications Office
Department of Health
Phone: 586-4445

Greg Knudsen
Communications Office
Department of Education
Phone: 586-3232