



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR

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**STOP FLU AT SCHOOL VACCINATION PROGRAM  
KICKS OFF FOR 2008-2009 FLU SEASON**

HONOLULU –The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH), in collaboration with public and private schools, health care providers, pediatric associations, and federal partners today announced the kickoff of the *Protect Hawai'i's Keiki: Stop Flu at School* program to offer free seasonal flu vaccine in schools this fall. The voluntary program aims to reduce illness in our schools and communities by preventing the spread of flu among schoolchildren and their families.

From October through December 2008, the Hawai'i State Department of Health will offer free seasonal flu vaccine to Hawai'i elementary and middle schoolchildren ages 5 to 13 years at the convenience of their school during the school day. Participating schools will be distributing parent/guardian information packets this week. Consent forms should be returned to schools no later than September 5, 2008. The DOH will be giving free 2 x 5 banners to participating schools to remind parents/guardians, students, and teachers when consent forms are due and when flu vaccination clinics will be held.

"We encourage parents and guardians to read their information packets carefully and to turn in their consent forms so our keiki have the opportunity to receive free flu vaccinations," said Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr. "Flu is a very serious illness. Countless school and work absences, hospitalizations, and even deaths could be prevented with a quick injection in the arm or nasal spray vaccine."

Nationally, schoolchildren have high rates of flu illness, exceeding 10 percent in most years. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there have been more than 80 flu-associated deaths among children in the U.S. from January 2008 to June 14, 2008. No flu related deaths in children have been reported in Hawai'i during the same period.

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"Hawai'i saw a very mild flu season last year," said Director of Health Chiyome Fukino, M.D. "We would hope that the '*Stop Flu at School*' program contributed to the decrease in illnesses. Through this program, we have an opportunity to avoid widespread illness and keep our keiki and communities healthy and flu-free. Getting the flu vaccine each year is our best protection against the flu."

Last year, Hawai'i became the first state in the nation to offer free flu vaccine to elementary and middle school students statewide. Through the program, flu vaccinations were provided to over 60,000 elementary and middle school students in about 340 public and private schools throughout the state. Over 9,000 school faculty and staff were also vaccinated. The program received a national award for its efforts.

"We're proud of the way students, parents, and guardians stepped up to protect the health of their families by taking advantage of the free flu vaccinations, right at their own schools," said Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education. "I strongly encourage schools and families to support this initiative and to sign up for the *Stop Flu at School* program this fall."

*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, Kauai Community College Nursing Program, Maui Community College Nursing Program, MedImmune, Sanofi Pasteur, Kaiser Permanente, and the Hawai'i Medical Service Association (HMSA).

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

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