PURPOSE:

RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) is committed to protecting our patients and visitors from exposure to influenza at our facilities and therefore has established and implemented this annual influenza vaccination program consistent with and in accordance adopted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations, as well as applicable law, including access to influenza vaccination under the New Jersey Influenza Vaccination by healthcare facilities.

DEFINITIONS:

“RWJBH Facility” means RWJBarnabas Health, Inc. and any of its wholly-owned affiliates.

“Covered Individual” means any RWJBH Facility employee, as well as, all students/faculty, residents, fellows, members of the medical staff, providers credentialed by the medical staff, volunteers, vendors, and contracted service providers providing services at any RWJBH Facility during Influenza Season, regardless of clinical responsibility and/or anticipated patient contact.

“Exempted Individual” means a Covered Individual who receives an approved medical exemption, religious exemption, or is exempt by a collective bargaining agreement which agreement covers services rendered at RWJBH facilities.

“Influenza Season” means the earlier of the CDC declared start of the influenza season or the second or third Monday of September of the then current annual influenza program year through an end date stipulated by RWJBarnabas Health upon review of the incidence of influenza in regions served by its facilities for the then current influenza program year.

POLICY:

Vaccination against influenza is mandatory for all Covered Individuals unless such Covered Individual is an Exempted Individual. Any Exempted Individual must wear a face mask provided by the RWJBH Facility during the Influenza Season, in patient areas and other areas designated by RWJBH Facility.

QUALIFICATIONS: This policy applies to all Covered Individuals.

PROCEDURE:
1. **TIMELINE:** RWJBH will initiate its influenza vaccination campaign in or around September of each year. The program typically concludes 2nd quarter of the following year.

2. **COMMUNICATION:** The vaccination campaign may include, but is not limited to the following:
   A. An education program which includes the following components: the influenza vaccine, non-vaccine influenza control and prevention measures, symptoms, diagnosis, transmission and impact of influenza;
   B. Posting of CDC influenza posters/educational pamphlets;
   C. Posting and distribution of the Influenza Vaccine Information Sheet (VIS); and
   D. Notice of vaccine availability at influenza clinics/sites throughout the facility.

3. **NEW HIRES:** All new employees hired will be required to receive an influenza vaccination OR to furnish any exemption requests (medical or religious) during the New Hire Physical process if starting work during the Influenza Season based on the referenced documentation listed under the exemption portion of the policy as a condition of employment.
   A. Any new hire that receives an approved exemption will then be an Exempted Individual, and subject to those requirements, including masking as set forth herein.
   B. Exemption requests not finalized prior to the new hires start date will require the new hire to follow masking guidelines until final review is rendered.
   C. If the exemption request is not approved, the new hire will have seven (7) business days to obtain the influenza vaccination or be subject to termination in accordance with this policy.

4. **MASKING REQUIREMENTS:** For Exempted Individuals, it is mandatory to properly wear a face mask (surgical and procedural masks will be available at the facility) during the entire Influenza Season in patient care areas and other areas as designated by RWJBarnabas Health and consistent with FAQs concerning face masks, which may be amended from time to time or will be removed from direct patient care responsibilities to other available responsibilities, if qualified, for the duration of the Influenza Season.

5. **Administration of the vaccination to EMPLOYEES and VOLUNTEERS:**
   A. For EMPLOYEES & VOLUNTEERS requesting the flu vaccine from a RWJBH facility process will include the following:
      i. Employee/Volunteer will be provided with the appropriate Influenza Vaccine Information Sheet (VIS).
      ii. Determine Employee/Volunteer is appropriate for vaccination by obtaining a brief medical history
         a. Severe Allergy or reactions to vaccinations in the past
         b. History of Guillain Barré Syndrome within 6 weeks after a previous influenza vaccination*.

* If Employee/Volunteer has answered yes, they should be referred to and assessed by Employee Health for determination of vaccine options or medical exemption.
B. Occupational Medicine clinicians will determine the appropriate form of influenza vaccine to be administered.
C. Document consent, administration of vaccine, name of manufacturer, lot number and expiration date.
D. File and maintain consent forms and administration records for all Employees/Volunteers through the customary record retention process.
E. Record the number of Employees/Volunteers vaccinated and/or otherwise in compliance with this policy.
F. Employee/Volunteer who has received the seasonal influenza vaccination at another facility, pharmacy, or physician’s office must provide proof of immunization.
G. Volunteer forms are available via the Volunteer Office of via Corporate Care/Employee Health Services.

6. **EXEMPTION PROCEDURES AND IDENTIFICATION:**

Any Covered Individual who is an employee or volunteer who wants to apply for a medical or religious exemption/sincerely held belief must complete either a medical exemption or religious exemption/sincerely held belief form for approval.

All other Exempted Individuals (non-employed credentialed medical staff, students/faculty, and vendors/contractors) must complete an attestation statement and submit proof of an approved exemption consistent with the requirements below to the appropriate RWJBH department managing their portion of the program.

A. **MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS:** Covered Individuals may be eligible for a Medical Exemption if they meet any of the following conditions and request an exemption:

- Persons who have a severe allergy to influenza vaccine or components of the vaccine;
- Persons who have been diagnosed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome within six (6) weeks of a prior influenza vaccination;
- Persons who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs if vaccine which is not produced from eggs is not available; or
- Other medical conditions supported by a treating physician on a case by case basis.

i. Any RWJBH employee requesting a medical exemption shall complete and submit a Request for Medical Exemption Form, via Employee Self Service (ESS) no later than **October 29th** of the current Influenza Season

ii. Following the effective date of this policy, any newly hired RWJBH employee shall submit a Request for Medical Exemption Form as part of their New Hire physical process. All new employees hired to start at any time during the Influenza Season will be required to furnish any exemption requests upon hire with the above referenced documentation, or to receive an influenza vaccine as a condition of employment. Exemption requests not finalized prior to the new hires start date will require the new hire to follow masking guidelines until final review is rendered.

iii. The RWJBarnabas Health Influenza Medical Review Committee (MRC) will review all completed employee and volunteer requests. All employees/volunteers will be notified of
the outcome of their requests in approximately 21 days following submission of completed request. Decisions by the RWJBH Influenza Medical Review Committee will be final.

iv. In general, RWJBarnabas Health approves a medical exemption based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention criteria. The approval may be full or limited. Covered Individual will not be required to submit requests for exemption in subsequent Influenza Seasons if they received a full approval. If they received a limited approval, the employee/volunteer’s medical exemption approval is only valid for the then current Influenza Season. They must apply for an exemption for any subsequent Influenza Seasons if they are seeking a medical exemption.

B. RELIGIOUS/ SINCERELY HELD BELIEF EXEMPTIONS: Unless otherwise required by applicable law, Covered Individual may be eligible for a Religious Exemption/Sincerely Held Belief in accordance with applicable law.

i. Any RWJBH employee requesting a religious/sincerely held belief exemption must complete and submit a Request for Religious/Sincerely Held Belief Exemption Accommodation form no later than October 29th of the then current Influenza Season.

ii. Following the effective date of this policy, any newly hired RWJBH employee shall submit a Request for Religious Exemption Form/Sincerely Held Belief Exemption as part of their new hire physical. Requests not finalized prior to the new hires’ start date will require the new hire to follow masking guidelines until final review is rendered.

iii. The RWJBH Religious/Sincerely Held Belief Exemption Review Committee (REC) will review all completed requests. All employees will be notified of the outcome of their requests in approximately 21 days following submission of completed requests. Decisions by the RWJBH Religious/Sincerely Held Belief Exemption Review Committee will be final.

iv. In general, once the RWJBH Committee approves a religious/sincerely held belief exemption, the Covered Individual will not be required to submit requests for exemption in subsequent Influenza Seasons, unless it is a limited approval. Covered Individual will not be required to submit requests for exemption in subsequent Influenza Seasons if they received a full approval. If they received a limited approval, the employee/volunteer’s religious exemption approval is only valid for the then current Influenza Season. They must apply for an exemption for any subsequent Influenza Seasons if they are seeking a religious exemption.

7. NON-COMPLIANCE:

A. EMPLOYEE: Any RWJBH facility employee who fails to be vaccinated or have an approved medical or religious/sincerely held belief exemption by the established date of the current Influenza Season will receive a 2-week paid suspension where they will continue to work and be paid but must complete the vaccination or receive an exemption to be considered
and Exempted Individual. At the end of the 2-weeks, if an employee is not vaccinated or Exempted, that individual’s employment relationship will be terminated.

During these 2 weeks, all non-compliant employees are required to wear a surgical or procedural mask when in direct contact with patients and in common areas as designed by RWJBH, or will be removed from direct patient cares responsibilities to other available responsibilities, if qualified, for the duration of the Influenza Season.

B. OTHER: Unless an Exempted Individual, any non-employee Covered Individual who fails to be vaccinated will not be permitted to perform duties at any RWJBH facility during the Influenza Season.

8. VACCINE AVAILABILITY:

In the event that the supply of available influenza vaccine is insufficient to vaccinate all eligible Covered Individuals, the RWJBH Facilities will prioritize the administration to highest risk groups as identified by the CDC and further suspend its influenza vaccination program, as permitted by applicable law.

INFECTION CONTROL: Standard Precautions, Influenza Droplet Precautions, Hand Hygiene

SAFETY: Medical Screening for vaccination eligibility.

REFERENCES:


JCAHO Standard IC 4.15, CDC Guidelines for Prevention of Influenza