DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

January 26, 2010

Dear Colleague:

As we begin this New Year, I wish to recognize your dedication in promoting the safety of our nation's children by vaccinating them against the 2009 H1N1influenza, and remind you that children from 6 months through 9 years of age need 2 doses of the vaccine against the 2009 H1N1 influenza to be fully protected.

As medical providers, we understand that children can develop severe complications from influenza infection. Since April 26, 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has received over 250 reports of laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated deaths among children caused by the 2009 H1N1 flu in the United States, and CDC estimates that over 1,100 deaths among children have probably occurred. Furthermore, children younger than 5 years old have higher rates of hospitalization caused by the 2009 H1N1 influenza than any other age group, and school age children have the highest rates of infection.

Vaccination is the best form of prevention against complications of influenza. Studies indicate that a second (booster) dose given 28 or more days after the first dose is needed to achieve optimal protection in children from 6 months through 9 years old.

The vaccine against the 2009 H1N1 influenza is made the same way as seasonal flu vaccines. CDC and the Food and Drug Administration, working with health care providers and state and local officials, are closely monitoring vaccine safety. Evidence from tens of millions of vaccinations indicates that the safety profile is similar to that of seasonal influenza vaccines, which have a very good safety track record. Side effects reported have been mild and brief, and similar to those experienced following seasonal flu vaccine. These include soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site, fainting (mainly adolescents), headache, muscle aches, fever, and nausea.

Your support during this 2009-2010 flu season has been instrumental to the success of this unprecedented national vaccination program. We now have plenty of vaccine for every child who needs that second dose, as well as for children who have not yet been vaccinated. Please remind parents and caregivers that children from 6 months through 9 years of age require *both* doses of the vaccine against the 2009 H1N1 influenza.

I look forward to continuing the partnership with you and your professional medical organizations, and ensuring that children's health remains a top priority of CDC.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, CDC, and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic
Substances and Disease Registry