

Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance

The Vermont Department of Health is looking for medical providers who would like to participate in the national Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance Program in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health. Sentinel providers are especially needed in Rutland, Addison, Bennington, and Orange Counties.

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

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 (CDC). Data reported by sentinel providers help to show a national picture of influenza activity throughout the U.S. Approximately 2400 providers in the U.S. were enrolled in this network during the 2007-08 influenza season.

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, ≥ 65 years). These data are transmitted once a week via the Internet 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.

Sentinel providers receive feedback on the data submitted, summaries of regional and national influenza data, and free subscriptions 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.

In addition, a supply of BinaxNOW™ rapid influenza test kits will be available at no cost for use by sentinel practices who wish to use them for a diagnostic tool in the patient-care setting, as a token of appreciation for your participation in the sentinel surveillance program. These rapid test kits are for your convenience and may be used for any patient throughout the flu season.

Sentinel providers also will be asked to submit a limited number of specimens for influenza viral culture to the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory. Influenza cultures are essential for virus subtyping, which tells us if this year's flu vaccine will provide good protection against circulating strains of influenza. Subtyping also provides data essential to determining next year's vaccine components, and may be critical in the early detection of novel influenza viruses that could cause pandemic influenza.

For more information and to enroll as an Influenza Sentinel Provider, please contact Sally Cook by phone at 802-865-7763 or email at scook@vdh.state.vt.us.

The *Infectious Disease Bulletin* can be viewed at:

<http://healthvermont.gov/pubs/IDB/index.aspx>

For questions & comments, please contact Patsy Kelso at (802) 863-7240

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Reportable Diseases
To Date

