Introduction

ABOUT THE FLU: YOUNG CHILDREN AND OLDER ADULTS
The CDC estimates that the 2018-2019 flu season resulted in up to 42.9 million illnesses, 647,000 hospitalizations, and 61,200 deaths. Among the most vulnerable to serious illness or death from the flu are children under the age of five and adults aged 65 years and older. CDC also estimates there was an increase nationally in flu vaccinations among these populations from the 2017-2018 flu season to the 2018-2019 flu season. While effectiveness varies, recent studies show vaccination reduces the risk of flu by 40 to 60 percent. Getting the annual flu vaccine not only reduces the risk of illness and death, but also lowers the risk of hospitalization and time away from school or work. For these and a variety of other public health-related reasons, the CDC recommends an annual flu vaccination for anyone over the age of six months.

Legislative Trends
Information and Public Education

When it comes to the flu and flu vaccines, education is critical to an effective public health strategy. With young children and older adults facing greater risks from seasonal flu, many states require that information about the flu and the flu vaccine be distributed by child care and adult residential facilities. In states that have adopted these requirements by law, the state health agency is often directed to develop information and materials.

CHILD CARE FACILITIES
Nine states have enacted laws requiring day care centers, nurseries, and preschools to provide information about the flu and flu vaccine to parents and caregivers. These laws require annual distribution of educational material, typically in late summer or early fall. Content varies among states. Kansas and Tennessee require information about the benefits of the flu vaccine, while other states, such as Florida and Massachusetts require the dissemination of information about flu causes, symptoms and transmission. Louisiana and Mississippi go a step further and require materials to include information about the availability and accessibility of the flu vaccine.

Most of these states direct their health agencies to develop or publish material for distribution as a way to ensure the information is based on sound public health practices. While no studies have examined the impact of these requirements, CDC data indicates a general increase in flu vaccination rates among young children in these states.

ADULT RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES
Since 2015, eight states have enacted laws requiring people in adult residential facilities, such as assisted living facilities, retirement communities, and nursing homes, to receive information about the flu and the flu vaccine. A Michigan law enacted in 2000 also requires that facilities assist residents in obtaining the flu vaccine. State health agencies are often tasked to develop materials for adult residential facilities as well.
Looking Ahead

ASTHO expects more states to adopt laws aimed at reducing the impact of flu among young children and older adults. In addition to requirements regarding education and information, foreseeable state legislative action includes new policies that would:

- Allow pharmacists to administer flu vaccines to children.
- Require children attending child care facilities to receive annual flu vaccinations.
- Require employees of child care and adult residential facilities to receive annual flu vaccinations.

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