

Now You Can Help With

Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance

...In Only a Few Minutes a Week!

What is an influenza sentinel provider?

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. Data reported by sentinel providers, in combination with other influenza surveillance data, provide a national picture of influenza virus and ILI activity in the U.S. More than 3,000 health care providers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the US Virgin Islands report over 30 million patient visits per year.

What data do sentinel providers collect? How and to whom are they reported?

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, a touch-tone telephone, or fax to a central data repository at CDC. Most providers report that it takes them **10 minutes a week** to compile and report their data. In addition, sentinel providers can submit specimens from a subset of patients for virus isolation **free of charge**.

Who can be an Influenza Sentinel Provider?

Providers of any specialty (e.g., family physicians, internists, pediatricians) in any type of practice (e.g., private practice, public health clinic, urgent care center, emergency room, student health center) are eligible to be influenza sentinel providers.

Why Volunteer?

Influenza viruses are constantly evolving and cause substantial morbidity and mortality. Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Over a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2006, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people. The data sentinel providers provide are critical for monitoring the impact of influenza and, when combined with other influenza surveillance data, can be used to guide prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection, and patient care. Sentinel providers receive weekly summaries of regional and national influenza data, access to free influenza testing at the WV Office of Laboratory Services, access to free influenza vaccine for staff members participating in the influenza surveillance program, and recognition at the end of each season for your service in the community. The most important consideration is that the data provided are critical for protecting the public's health.

