

December 21, 2004

RE: UPDATE ON PRIORITY GROUPS TO RECEIVE FLU VACCINE

On December 17, 2004 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee Immunization Practices (ACIP) released updated recommendations for individuals eligible to receive the flu vaccine. **Effective January 3, 2005 the flu vaccine priority group will be expanded to also include persons age 50-64, out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of persons in high risk groups.**

The high risk groups for serious complications for experiencing serious complications from the flu are persons aged 65 years or older, children under 2 years of age, pregnant women, residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities, children and teens receiving long-term aspirin therapy, and people of any age who have chronic health problems. **We encourage all persons in the high risk groups to seek vaccine.**

Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services support the ACIP recommendations and encourage those local providers that have sufficient vaccine supplies to expand flu vaccinations to the new priority group.

Many local providers have received or will soon receive flu vaccine. Persons who have not yet received their flu shot and are in the updated priority group should contact their primary care provider.