

## How Can You Become a Michigan Sentinel Physician?

Contact the  
Michigan Department of  
Community Health:

### **Cristi Carlton, MPH**

Epidemiologist

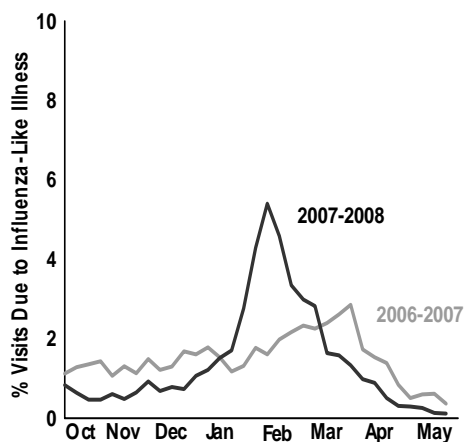
Email: [CarltonC2@michigan.gov](mailto:CarltonC2@michigan.gov)

Phone: 517-335-9104

Fax: 517-335-9855

Or your  
Local Health Department

Comparison of Percent Visits due to Influenza-Like Illness  
Reported by Michigan Influenza Sentinel Physicians  
2006-2007 and 2007-2008 Seasons



## Michigan Sentinel Surveillance Enrollment Form

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Practice Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fax completed  
form to the  
Michigan Department  
Of Community Health:  
517-335-9855  
or email info to:

[CarltonC2@michigan.gov](mailto:CarltonC2@michigan.gov)

Image Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

# Fight The Flu!

Join the  
Outpatient  
Influenza-like  
Illness  
Surveillance  
Network

Michigan Department  
of Community Health  
**MDCH**  
Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor  
Janet Olszewski, Director

## Influenza Sentinel Surveillance in Michigan

Influenza viruses are constantly evolving, which became very apparent in the spring of 2009 with the emergence of 2009 H1N1. That is one of the many reasons why influenza surveillance, with the help of local sentinel sites, is vital.

The Michigan Department of Community Health participates in the Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet), a collaborative effort between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local health departments, and volunteer sentinel health care providers, to monitor the impact of influenza in Michigan each year.

On a larger scale, sentinel reports may provide advance warning of an emerging influenza pandemic. Given Michigan's status as an international border state, vigilance in monitoring emerging diseases takes on even greater significance.

## Who Can Be an Influenza Sentinel?

Medical providers of any specialty (*e.g.*, family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, infectious disease) in nearly any setting (*e.g.*, private practice, public health clinic, urgent care center, emergency room, university student health center) who are likely to see patients with influenza-like illness can be sentinels. Allied health care professionals can have a primary role when working under the direction of a licensed physician. The only exception is for those providers who primarily care for institutionalized populations (*e.g.*, nursing homes, prisons).

## What Does an Influenza Sentinel Do?

When you enroll as an influenza sentinel, your responsibilities are:

1. Collect data:
  - Total number of patient visits each week
  - Weekly counts of the number of patient visits for influenza-like illness\* (ILI) within four age categories (0-4 years, 5-24 years, 25-64 years, and 65+ years).
2. Report: Send collected data to a central data repository at the CDC via fax or the Internet on a weekly basis.
3. Collect respiratory specimens from a sample of patients with influenza-like illness for respiratory virus culture at no charge by the Michigan Department of Community Health Laboratory.

\*For surveillance purposes, influenza-like illness is defined as patients with a fever of 100° F or greater and a cough and/or sore throat.

## How Can I Incorporate Sentinel Surveillance Into my Practice?

While every practice is different, many successful Michigan sentinels have adopted similar strategies.

Methods of tracking the weekly number of visits due to ILI:

- Use a daily tally sheet with separate age groups
- Note ILI on encounter forms
- Review medical records daily or weekly
- Create an ILI code in electronic medical record or billing systems

To track the weekly number of office visits:

- Review appointment book, billing data, encounter forms, or registration log book

**Contact MDCH for more tips!**

## What are the Advantages of Being an Influenza Sentinel?

Sentinel physicians receive **free laboratory testing** (respiratory virus culture) for approximately eleven specimens per site per year. Specimens are tested at the Michigan Department of Community Health Laboratory and results are shared with the provider by fax. Initial results take less than two days and final results take about a week.

Sentinel physicians also receive:

- **Weekly feedback on the data submitted**
- **Summaries of regional, state, and national influenza data**
- **Free subscriptions to CDC**
  - *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*
  - *Emerging Infectious Diseases*
- **Free registration at an MDCH Regional Immunization Conference for reporting regularly**

In addition, family practice residents may fulfill their **residency research requirement** by participating in the influenza surveillance system.

The most important consideration in deciding to volunteer, however, is that the information provided each week by influenza sentinels is critical for protecting the public's health in Michigan.

**Become an Influenza Sentinel Today!**

We are grateful to Erin Campbell at Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services for her work on an earlier version of this document.