



Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention (CDC)  
Atlanta GA 30329-4027

November 27, 2019

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

Thank you for your letter to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex M. Azar II and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) former Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan regarding the influenza vaccination of migrant families currently held at Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facilities. As the nation's health protection agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works to protect America from health, safety, and security threats, both foreign and domestic. I am responding on behalf of Secretary Azar.

Influenza can cause severe illness, and at times can lead to death. CDC estimates that influenza was associated with more than 48.8 million illnesses and 79,400 deaths in the United States during the 2017–2018 influenza season, a particularly bad season. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. CDC recommends routine annual influenza vaccination for all persons aged at least 6 months and older, including migrants entering the United States. CDC encourages vaccination at the earliest feasible point of entry for all persons at least 6 months of age, which is in concurrence with our general influenza vaccine recommendation. Priority should be given to the screening and isolation of ill migrants, early antiviral treatment, and flu vaccination for all staff. HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Division of Health for Unaccompanied Children, follows CDC guidelines and reports that children in ORR care are routinely vaccinated against influenza as part of their initial medical exam.

While CDC does make immunization recommendations to prevent the introduction and spread of influenza and other infectious diseases, questions regarding the immunization policy and vaccine status of migrant adults and families in CPB custody should be directed to CBP. Therefore, CDC defers to DHS to address the specific questions raised in your letter.

Thank you again for your letter about this important health topic. If you have additional questions or concerns regarding CDC's vaccine program, please contact Nancy Tourk in the CDC Washington Office at (202) 245-0600 or [NTourk@cdc.gov](mailto:NTourk@cdc.gov). A copy of this response is also being sent to the co-signers of your letter.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Redfield, MD  
Director, CDC