



# Rhode Island Flu Task Force

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## Rhode Island Flu Task Force



- Formed in August 2011
- Approximately 50 members
- Epidemiologists, physicians, nurses, public health professionals, pharmacists, insurers, college and university personnel, nursing home staff, and healthcare facility administrators

## Mission



Identify barriers and improving access to influenza vaccine for all Rhode Islanders.

## The Rhode Island situation



Healthcare worker flu vaccination rate in Rhode Island – 65%

How can we ask Rhode Islanders to follow the flu vaccination recommendations of their healthcare providers when healthcare providers themselves are not being vaccinated?

## Drafting of regulations



- Task Force and Department legal team decide to use regulations
- Draft regulations
- Hold public hearings
  - Two public hearings held – July and September 2012

## Obstacles



- Definitions
- Lawsuit from the ACLU

## Response



- Task Force and department meet to devise response
- Regulations amended to include masking provision
- Lawsuit dropped

## Regulations promulgated



Healthcare workers can:

- Be vaccinated against influenza
- Have a medical exemption
- Not be vaccinated, but wear a surgical mask during widespread influenza

## Regulations promulgated



- Vaccination deadline - December 15
- Facilities report electronically
- Healthcare workers not in compliance subject to \$100 fines; possible finding of unprofessional conduct

## Regulations in place



- December 5, 2012 – influenza widespread in Rhode Island
- No complaints filed against any healthcare worker for failing to wear a mask

## Results



- A 22% increase in the immunization rate of healthcare workers from the previous season (65% vs. 87%)
- A 10% increase in the immunization rate of the general public from the previous season



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