



## PRESS RELEASE

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### SAINT FRANCIS IMPLEMENTS MANDATORY FLU VACCINATION POLICY

*Campaign Theme: "Save Lives. Immunize!"*

*(Hartford, Conn. June 6, 2013)* – Saint Francis Care today announced that all Hospital physicians, clinical and administrative staffs, volunteers, vendors, contractors, students and temporary workers who serve on the premises of Saint Francis sites will be required to receive a flu vaccination by December 1, 2013.

The theme for this year's campaign frames the issue succinctly: "Save lives. Immunize!" (see attached logo) The logo will be appearing on campus-wide materials including posters, flyers and internal employee communications.

The purpose of this mandatory policy is to maximize annual flu vaccination participation. Vaccinations will help protect patients, employees, their families and the community from acquiring or spreading the influenza virus.

"We believe now is the time to endorse this critical public health policy," said James Mazo, M.D., Medical Director, Occupational Health, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. "The influenza vaccine is a safe and effective way to combat the spread of the flu virus. In light of last year's difficult flu season, the threat of a potentially disastrous flu outbreak must be taken very seriously," added Dr. Mazo.

According to federal health authorities, each year, about 36,000 Americans die from the flu. More than 200,000 are hospitalized with flu-related complications each year.

Exemptions will be allowed for those individuals with specific medical conditions or certain religious beliefs.

Upon vaccination, a validation badge will be provided and must be worn at all times during the designated flu season to demonstrate full compliance with the immunization mandate.

Those who are exempt will be required to wear surgical masks within six feet of any patient when entering a clinical area throughout the designated influenza season.

Any employed staff member who has not received a flu shot or an approved exemption by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, will be considered ineligible for work until compliant with the policy and will be placed on a five-day consecutive unpaid suspension. Employees who do not comply with this policy within five days after the vaccination period ends will be considered to have voluntarily resigned from his/her position.

“While some may consider these measures severe, we are committed to introducing this important, life-saving measure for the safety and health of our patients, families and colleagues,” said Kathy Smith, Director of Infection Prevention.

To date, 22 of the state’s 30 Connecticut hospitals already require mandatory flu vaccinations or have plans to adopt a similar policy.

### **About Saint Francis Care**

Saint Francis *Care* is an integrated healthcare delivery system established by Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, an anchor institution in north central Connecticut since 1897. Licensed for 617 beds and 65 bassinets, it is a major teaching hospital and the largest Catholic hospital in New England. Other major entities of Saint Francis *Care* include The Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital, the Connecticut Joint Replacement Institute, the Hoffman Heart and Vascular Institute of Connecticut, the Saint Francis/Mount Sinai Regional Cancer Center, the Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Center for Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care and Neuroscience Research, and Saint Francis Health*Care* Partners. Johnson Memorial Medical Center, parent organization of Johnson Memorial Hospital, Evergreen Health Care Center, and Home and Community Health Services, is also a Saint Francis *Care* Partner. Saint Francis *Care*’s services are supported by a network of five major Access Centers and eight additional medical office centers sited throughout the region. For more information, visit [www.stfranciscare.com](http://www.stfranciscare.com).