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**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
of Northwest Michigan

Widespread flu virus kills 4 Michigan children; Health Department adds immunization clinics

JANUARY 9 – The recent deaths of four children in central and southwest Michigan underscore the importance of getting flu shots for the entire family, according to Joshua Meyerson, M.D., Medical Director for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. To help meet community demand, the Health Department has scheduled four additional immunization clinics: on **January 15th** from 10am-7pm at its Petoskey/Harbor Springs location, and on **January 18th** from 8am-12pm at the Mancelona Family Resource Center, 1pm-5pm in Gaylord, and 8am-3pm in Charlevoix. Walk-ins are welcome during these clinics, but appointments can also be made for other dates and times by calling **(800) 432-4121**.

“Every child and adult should receive the flu vaccine as soon as possible,” Meyerson emphasizes. “Those who are not vaccinated are risking their own health, and the health of their families. By carrying the illness, they pose a threat to others – especially young children and the elderly – who are at much higher risk for life-threatening complications arising from the illness.”

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, three of the four children killed by the flu virus had not been vaccinated, and the fourth had received the vaccine too young. As of the end of December, statewide hospitalization rates and emergency room visits were reported to have increased significantly.

“Quite simply, influenza vaccinations are the best protection,” Meyerson added. “If you can’t make it to one of the Health Department’s upcoming immunization clinics, talk to your physician or visit a local pharmacy offering the flu vaccine. There’s really no excuse not to get vaccinated.”

The Health Department offers appointments for flu shots and many other immunizations at its offices in Bellaire, Mancelona, Charlevoix, Petoskey/Harbor Springs and Gaylord. The cost for seasonal flu vaccination is \$25. Medicaid and Medicare are accepted, as well as private insurance, or clients may pay by cash or check. Call the Health Department at **(800) 432-4121** to schedule an appointment.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties.