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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flu makes appearance in Hillsdale County

Coldwater, MI – With an early start to the flu season, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is encouraging all tri-county residents to protect themselves by getting flu shots. There have been 10 cases of the flu confirmed thus far in Hillsdale County. Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the tri-county health department states, “The availability and affordability of the vaccine make it easier than ever to protect yourself and your family.” Yvonne Atwood, Director of Personal Health and Disease Prevention adds, “We are encouraging everyone over the age of 6 months to get the flu shot, including pregnant women and the elderly. In particular, school-age children who are highly susceptible to catching the virus. Reducing the spread of the disease is especially crucial in our schools. Children who receive a flu shot are helping to create healthier classrooms and prevent missed days of school.”

If your child is 18 years or younger, uninsured, lacks immunization coverage as part of their health insurance policy or are covered by Healthy Michigan or some other form of Medicaid, he/she is eligible to receive their shot free of charge through the Vaccines For Children Program. According to Atwood, “Now more than ever, getting a flu shot is both easy and affordable. Manufacturers have begun shipping flu vaccines for the 2018-2019 flu season, so please call the health department to find out more and to schedule your appointment.” People who should especially receive the flu vaccine, because they may be at higher risk for complications or negative consequences, include:

- Children age 6 months through 4 years;
- Pregnant women;
- People 50 years old or older;
- People age 6 months and older with chronic health problems;



- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;
- Health care workers, and;
- Household contacts and caregivers of, or people who live with, a person at high risk for complications from the flu;
- Out-of-home caregivers of children less than 6 months old.

In addition to the flu vaccine, be sure to take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

The timing and duration of flu season varies, but can begin as early as September and last as late as May. It takes about two weeks for immunity to develop and offer protection against flu after receiving a vaccine. Vaccination can be given any time during the flu season, but the CDC recommends getting it before the end of October. Infection with the flu virus can cause fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing and body aches. For more information, visit our website at www.bhsj.org, follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BHSJWIC or stop into your local county office.

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