Date:                     January 8, 2014

To:                          All NAH Employees, Volunteers, and Medical Staff

From:                    Ann M. Bollone, NAH, VP Human Resources

Subject:               Influenza Illness Guideline

At this time, influenza illnesses are increasing nationwide. For the safety of our patients, employees, volunteers, and medical staff, it is time to remind all who are ill to stay home.  Employees with a fever of 37.8°C or 100°F or greater, and/or flu-like symptoms such as cough, headache, body aches, chills, sore throat, or difficulty breathing will be instructed not to report to work, or if at work, will be instructed to go home.  Employees with influenza-like symptoms are encouraged to seek medical attention, especially those with underlying health conditions.  If seen early after the onset of symptoms, antiviral medications, if indicated, may reduce the severity and shorten the duration of illness, and reduce complications.

**All employees are required to follow proper call-off protocol.** All absences for influenza or influenza like illness will not be counted against attendance; however, healthcare provider documentation of illness will be required.  Employees will be paid in accordance with HR 7-1 Paid Time Off and HR 7-2 Short-Term Disability policies. Most employees will use 32 hours of paid time off if available (unpaid if not available), prior to accessing Short-Term Disability (paid at 85% of base salary).  Employees who have a written healthcare provider confirmation of influenza illness may immediately access Short-Term Disability. All healthcare provider documentation of influenza illness must be submitted to the Employee Health Office.

For return to work following influenza or influenza-like-illness, NAH will follow CDC recommendations regarding healthcare workers returning to the job.

* Exclude from work for **at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever** (without the use of fever reducing medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen).  Persons with persistent respiratory symptoms will need further medical evaluation prior to returning to work.
* Remind employees who return to work about the importance of adherence to respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. If symptoms such as cough and sneezing are still present, the employee should wear a facemask during patient-care activities.

Employees not vaccinated due to approved exemptions are reminded to wear a mask at all times during patient encounters and when working on patient care units.

**Remember proper hand hygiene is key to preventing the spread of influenza and other illnesses.**