

Smallpox Vaccination Safeguards: *A Checklist for Health Care Workers*

Health care workers recognize that responding to emergencies is their job. Now, as the first being asked to volunteer for smallpox vaccination, they stand ready if adequate protections are in place. In its haste to devise and implement a smallpox vaccination plan aimed at frontline health care and emergency workers, the Bush administration neglected a host of complex issues of critical importance. Many are key components that SEIU believes should be included in any smallpox vaccination plan implemented by an employer or a local/state health department. These components will ensure necessary safeguards to protect health care workers, their patients, families and communities.

SEIU has created this checklist to help you evaluate specific smallpox vaccination plan safeguards.

checklist

1. **You have a voice in shaping the policies and procedures that your facility develops for this voluntary vaccination plan.** Yes No
2. **Your employer has a written vaccination plan and will provide a copy for your review.** Yes No
3. **Thorough education about the vaccine and its risks offered.** Yes No
Education sessions are
 - Scheduled during regular work hours.
 - Conducted by a knowledgeable instructor and include the opportunity to ask questions.
 - Comprehensive, covering all aspects of the live *vaccinia* vaccine, especially its risks.
 - Enhanced by printed materials/handouts geared to audience grade level(s) and language(s).
4. **Pre-screening and counseling provided free and confidentially on work time to help you learn of any personal or household members' risk factors in order to weigh your decision.** Yes No
Screening tools include
 - A questionnaire to assess the individual, household and patient contacts at-risk medical conditions.
 - Counseling to allow for full and open discussion of all concerns.
5. **Medical testing provided free and confidentially to advise you of any previously unknown risk factors.** Yes No
Testing
 - Conducted during regular work hours.
 - Checks for risk factors including immunosuppression (including HIV), pregnancy, eczema or atopic dermatitis (current or past), and other risk factors.
 - Eliminates workers if they are at risk.

Follow-up: free, confidential counseling is available if desired during regular work hours.
6. **You can say "No" to this voluntary vaccination at any time for any reason without fear of job discrimination.** Yes No
7. **An informed consent form is provided to you should you choose to get vaccinated.** Yes No
The form is clear, understandable and includes information about the risks and benefits of vaccination.
 - A copy is provided for your records.
8. **A trained vaccinator is available to provide vaccination.** Yes No

9. **Needles with safety features, rather than conventional bifurcated needles, are available and being used.** Yes No
(Safer needles are necessary because conventional bifurcated needles may expose the vaccinator to *vaccinia* and potentially to HIV, hepatitis B and other bloodborne pathogens.)
10. **Monitoring is done onsite on a daily basis.** Yes No
- Each day, a health care provider, trained in the smallpox vaccination program, observes the inoculation site and changes the dressing/bandage if necessary.
 - A confidential, toll-free "hotline" is available 24/7 for questions and concerns.
11. **There is a plan to educate and protect vulnerable patients from recently vaccinated health care workers.** Yes No
- Vaccinated health care workers are educated and trained on how to avoid exposing household members as well as patients to inadvertent transmission of *vaccinia*.
 - An infection-control specialist is assigned to ensure that vulnerable patients are not exposed to health care workers who have been vaccinated.
 - An opportunity for administrative leave or reassignment is made available to the vaccinated worker (without loss of wages), if necessary, to protect vulnerable patients from the *vaccinia* virus.
 - Patients are informed of the safeguards taken to protect them.
12. **Tracking and reporting of adverse reactions are routinely performed.** Yes No
- Any complications, mild or severe, are reported by the hospital to the state or local health department overseeing the vaccination program and as well as to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
 - You have immediate access to adverse reaction reports to help you decide whether to be vaccinated.
13. **Medical costs due to complications from the smallpox vaccination are covered.** Yes No
- Medical care for health care workers who develop complications from the smallpox vaccine, whether mild or severe, are covered by the employer.
 - Health care workers with health insurance do not pay insurance co-payments if they experience complications from the vaccine.
 - Medical care for family members who become ill from exposure to the vaccine is covered.
14. **Lost work time is compensated in the event of an adverse reaction to the smallpox vaccine.** Yes No
- A special sick leave bank has been set aside so that workers who miss a day or two of work will not have to use their own sick leave or vacation time.
 - Workers compensation is available to partially cover wage loss for more severe adverse reactions.
 - Your employer provides a disability program that will cover the difference between workers compensation and regular wages.

For more information

- Go to SEIU's Web site at www.SeiuSmallpox.org.
- A downloadable CDC brochure with pictures of normal and severe reactions to the smallpox vaccine is available at www.bt.cdc.gov/training/smallpoxvaccine/reactions.
- Additional information about smallpox and the vaccine is provided on the Department of Health and Human Services Web site at www.smallpox.gov and on the CDC's Web site at www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/vaccination/facts.asp.