

Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners

630 Camp Street, New Orleans, LA 70130

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***** STATEMENT OF POSITION *****

Public Immunization

Revised September 27, 2000

The administration of influenza, pneumonia, diphtheria, tetanus, or other vaccines constitutes the practice of medicine, as defined by Louisiana law, and may therefore be performed only by a physician licensed to practice medicine in this state or by a licensed practical or registered nurse under the specific direction and supervision of a physician. A nurse's legal capacity to administer vaccines requires the order of a physician given with respect to an identified, individual patient. A physician's blanket, undifferentiated authorization for administration of influenza or other vaccinations to the public is legally insufficient and ineffectual. In the absence of a physician's patient-specific order, that is, or where a licensed physician is not physically present, the administration of vaccinations by nurses or other personnel would constitute the unauthorized practice of medicine.

The Board has determined, however, that there are certain situations in which it may be acceptable for immunizations to be administered to the public without the necessity of the continuous presence of a physician. The Board believes that it is acceptable, that is, for immunizations to be administered to the public at and by licensed health care facilities, by state or federal public health immunization programs or by other programs approved by the Board, provided that such programs are conducted under general supervision of a licensed physician who is promptly available for consultation regarding contraindications and adverse reactions and provided that a single physician assumes responsibility for the safe conduct of the immunization program.

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