



## **RECENTLY REPORTED CHILDHOOD DEATHS FROM INFLUENZA ARE A STARK REMINDER TO VACCINATE NOW**

BETHESDA, MD – February 24 – In recent weeks, a number of childhood deaths across the country have been linked to influenza. These tragic reports underscore the importance of preventing this serious and sometimes deadly disease with an annual flu vaccine.

Influenza vaccine is still available and with influenza activity at a relatively high level across the country, now is the time for anyone who hasn't yet gotten the vaccine to do so. It takes about two weeks for the body to develop protection after receiving an influenza vaccine. The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* urges everyone who raises and cares for children to make sure those kids are vaccinated against influenza as soon as possible.

"Most people use the term "flu" generically, to describe a number of different viruses that circulate in winter months (between December and May), but true influenza is much more severe than these other viruses," said Dr. Carol J. Baker, Immediate Past President of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases and Chair of *CIIC*. "It's also preventable. Unfortunately far too few kids get the vaccine each year. As a pediatrician, it is devastating to see kids suffer needlessly."

National health experts recommend that all kids 6 months through 18 years of age receive an annual vaccination. Younger children and those with underlying medical conditions, such as asthma or diabetes, are at particularly increased risk for severe complications from the flu. Because infants younger than 6 months cannot be vaccinated themselves, parents must protect them by making sure those around them are vaccinated.

### **About the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition***

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* was established by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases to protect infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with "one strong voice" the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority. Influenza causes about 100 deaths and 20,000 hospitalizations among children annually.

*Coalition* members represent 30 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups committed to protecting children's health and encouraging wellness. The *Coalition* is made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur.

More information about influenza immunization, as well as educational and informational tools are available on the *Coalition's* Web site at [www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org](http://www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org).

###