

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts: Community Hospital of San Bernardino—Diane L. Martin, Tel. 909.806.1115
St. Bernardine Medical Center—Stephanie Johnson, Tel. 909.881.4416

CHW's San Bernardino Hospitals Announce New Visitor Guidelines During Flu Season

Age restrictions implemented to further protect patients, employees, volunteers and visitors.

San Bernardino, CA – This week, the visitor policy at St. Bernardine Medical Center and Community Hospital of San Bernardino, both members of Catholic Healthcare West, will be modified in response to this year's flu season. For the health and wellness of our patients and staff alike, beginning Wednesday, October 28, 2009, only visitors 16 and older will be permitted entry into both hospitals. In addition, all visitors are required to sanitize their hands upon entry to the hospital, and those with flu-like symptoms will be asked not to visit until they are well.

"This year's flu season is different from what is considered typical, and our hospitals are responding accordingly," stated Chief Nurse Executive Vicky McCain. "In addition to this new policy, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are integral parts of our infection control education and a continued focus on these elements remains a priority for all employees and visitors during flu season," McCain continued.

"Due to the vulnerability of our patients, we ask visitors to follow these guidelines," states Community Hospital of San Bernardino Administrator Diane E. Nitta. "Guests will be notified at points of entrance of this new policy and receive information about the flu."

During this time of year, it is common that hospital emergency departments see increased patient volumes. This year, however, the volume is spiking somewhat earlier than normal. For example, St. Bernardine Medical Center's Emergency Department has seen a 15 percent increase in patient volume over the past few weeks and similarly, St. Bernardine's free-standing Urgent Care Center in Fontana has seen a 40 percent increase within the same time period. In spite of elevated volumes – not necessarily related to the flu season, St. Bernardine has managed to continue to see patients in a timely manner.

(more)

Hospital caregivers are on the front lines in responding to patients with the seasonal flu/H1N1 flu, explains Vicky McCain. "It is our goal to protect them and our patients so that we may continue to offer the highest quality of care," she stated.

Further, Community Hospital and St. Bernardine strongly encourage vaccination against H1N1 and the season flu and have provided free, on-site vaccinations to its staff. Although the receipt of the H1N1 vaccinations remains unclear, officials plan to administer the shots immediately upon delivery.

The new 16 and older visitor policy will remain in place until further notice. Both hospitals' policies were created in tandem with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control as well as the San Bernardino County Public Department of Health.

-30-

About Community Hospital of San Bernardino

Community Hospital of San Bernardino is a private, non-profit, 321-bed acute care hospital providing the following services: emergency room, acute inpatient care, obstetrical services, inpatient and outpatient surgery, behavioral health services and long-term neurological care for adults and children. Affiliated with Catholic Healthcare West, Community Hospital of San Bernardino is accredited by The Joint Commission and is located at 1805 Medical Center Drive, between Highland and Baseline in the city of San Bernardino. For additional information, visit www.chsb.org.

About St. Bernardine Medical Center

Serving the health care needs of the people of the Inland Empire since 1931, St. Bernardine is a highly-regarded 463-bed, nonprofit, tertiary acute care hospital located in San Bernardino, California. The hospital offers a full continuum of services, from family care to heart surgery, treating an average of 51,500 individuals in the Emergency Department, delivering 2,600 babies and admitting more than 17,900 patients for treatment each year. St. Bernardine Medical Center is a member of Catholic Healthcare West. Visit www.StBernardineMedicalCenter.org for additional information.