



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

AUG 20 2004

Patrick J. McConnon, M.P.H.
Executive Director
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
2872 Woodcock Boulevard, Suite 303
Atlanta, Georgia 30341-4015

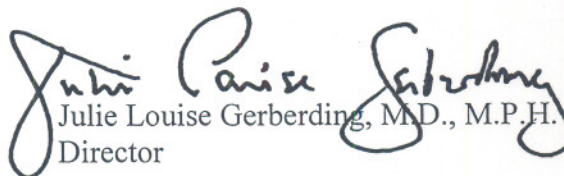
Dear Mr. McConnon:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists' (CSTE) position statement 04-ID-04 entitled "Influenza-Associated Pediatric Mortality." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important public health issue.

CDC's influenza surveillance revealed an increase in influenza-related mortality in persons 18 years and younger during the 2003-2004 season. Preventing and reducing pediatric mortality is a top priority for CDC. Influenza infection is highest among children, and increased numbers of associated pediatric deaths are of grave concern to CDC. Therefore, CSTE's position statement, which defines an influenza-associated death as that of a person 18 years or younger whose death results from a clinically compatible illness that was confirmed to be influenza and makes such death a reportable condition, substantially assists the public health community in efforts to define the burden of influenza in children. It also emphasizes the need to vaccinate children, and others, for influenza. Vaccination is the primary method for preventing influenza and its severe complications.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide a response to CSTE's position statement and applaud your commitment to this important public health issue.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director