



Spring 2020 eNewsletter



Message from our Chief Operating Officer

Thankfully, summer is right around the corner! We recognize it's been a difficult year so far. Our country is grappling with big issues, including the COVID-19 pandemic and social injustice. I love the following quote from Maya Angelou: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." I think this holds true for a lot of things right now.

Here at Families Fighting Flu we have been continuing to "do better" in our fight against flu, and in addition have been working in part to arm our audiences with evidence-based information around COVID-19. **Our goal is to empower a diverse range of people with information so they can lead safer, healthier lives.**

To date for the 2019-2020 flu season, **182 children lost their lives to flu** and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates there have been **24,000 - 62,000 flu-related deaths in the U.S.** Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a recent decline in routine childhood immunizations, as reported by the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), which means we may also see outbreaks of other vaccine-preventable diseases if this trend continues.

The next flu season is right around the corner and some medical experts have predicted that we may experience a second wave of COVID-19 during the 2020-2021 flu season. **The good news is that flu is vaccine-preventable** and we can all do our part to help protect ourselves and others through annual flu vaccination and prevention methods such as hand washing, disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, and social distancing, as appropriate.

Please be sure to check out our **2019-2020 Flu Season Report** below. With your support during the 2019-2020 flu season, we have once again been able to **reach millions of people with important flu-related information.** As we have for the past 16 years, our organization will continue to share educational resources and evidence-based information in an effort to protect children, families, and communities against the flu.

Wishing you and yours a healthy, happy summer season! As always, please feel free to reach out to us as we welcome your involvement, feedback, and support.

Sincerely,

Check Out Our 2019-2020 Flu Season Report!

We're excited to announce that our 2019-2020 flu season report has been published on our [website](#). Thank you to our donors and sponsors who make our life-saving work possible!

Highlights of Families Fighting Flu's accomplishments this past flu season include:

- Reaching over **636 million** people through quotes and features in **CNN, Heathline, SELF Magazine, New York Times, NPR**, and more
- Sharing the stories of 6 FFF family members on the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Flu Fighters** webpage
- Distributing over **45,000 pieces of hard copy flu educational materials** through our Flu Champion program
- Live speaking engagements at national and international conferences such as the **National Conference for Immunization Coalitions and Partnerships** and the **International Neonatal and Maternal Immunization Summit**
- Advocating for **strong public health and immunization policies** in Massachusetts, Virginia, New York, Florida, North Dakota, and South Dakota
- Increasing our **social media reach across all platforms by 41%** as compared to last flu season
- Adding **8 new family stories** to our website

Flu education is critical to our mission and our personal stories put a face on the disease.



If we are to be successful in raising flu vaccination rates, then we must give people a compelling reason to get vaccinated.



Decreasing Pediatric Vaccination Rates due to COVID-19

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, childhood vaccination rates have dramatically decreased. Two CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports (MMWR) found that since the United States declared a national emergency in response to the coronavirus disease:

- Nationally, there has been a substantial decline in the number of vaccines administered to all children under 18 years old.
- In Michigan specifically, the number of vaccines administered to children 18-years-old and younger decreased by 21.5% compared to prior months.
- In Michigan specifically, the number of vaccines administered to children younger than 24 months decreased by 15.5% compared to prior months.
- Decreased childhood vaccination rates could lead to outbreaks of preventable diseases such as whooping cough, measles, and meningitis.

While now may seem like a scary time to head to your healthcare provider's office, well-child visits and vaccinations are essential services to help ensure you and your loved ones are protected against deadly diseases. Your trusted healthcare provider has safety protocols in place to offer the care your child(ren) need.

You can read the report about national declines in vaccination rates [here](#) and the report about Michigan's decline in vaccination rates [here](#).



Basic Prevention Methods to Help Prevent COVID-19 and Flu

Many of the same methods for preventing seasonal flu can also be used to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Here are some simple, actionable steps to take to help prevent both flu and COVID-19:

1. Stay up-to-date on all vaccinations

Some viruses can make you susceptible to other illnesses. For example, people who are sick with flu can be more susceptible to contracting pneumonia because your immune system is already compromised. It's important to ensure your immunizations are current so that if you do become ill, you have protection against illnesses that are vaccine-preventable. Although there is currently no vaccine available to protect against COVID-19, there are vaccines for flu, pneumonia, and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib).

2. Wash your hands

While it sounds simple, this method can help prevent the spread of many illnesses. Experts suggest that you lather your hands with any type of soap for at least 20 seconds. If you don't have access to soap or running water, alcohol-based sanitizers can be used. Some examples of when you should wash your hands include:

- After coughing or sneezing
- When caring for someone who is sick
- Before, during, and after preparing food

- After using the bathroom

3. Avoid close contact with sick people and stay home if you're sick

Respiratory illnesses like flu and COVID-19 can be transmitted through tiny droplets in the air when someone coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can travel as far as 3 – 6 feet so try to avoid being around people who are visibly sick. To help prevent the spread of any illness, stay home when you're sick to avoid exposing other people. Of course, one exception is to leave home to seek medical care.



4. Clean and disinfect surfaces at home, school, and work

Some viruses can live on hard surfaces for up to 48 hours and these viruses can enter our bodies when we touch our face, specifically our mouth, nose, and eyes. Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces to help prevent the spread of germs.

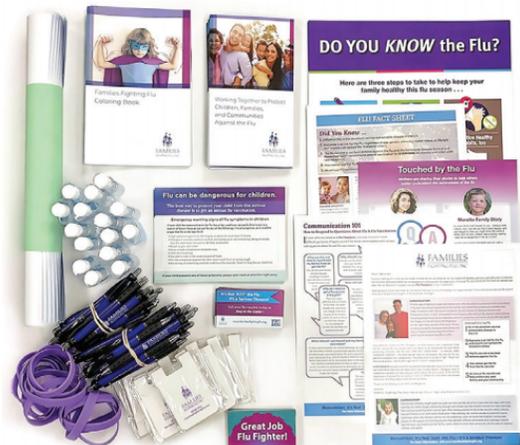
Plans for the 2020-21 Flu Champion Program

Our Flu Champion program, which launched in September 2019, has proven to be an impactful program to improve education and advocacy around flu. During the 2019-2020 flu season, we distributed over **100 toolkits and 45,000 pieces of educational materials** for schools & universities, healthcare professionals, employers & community organizations, and general advocates.

We look forward to expanding this program during the 2020-2021 flu season to help engage more member families, advocates, volunteers, healthcare professionals, and partners and support them as participants in education and advocacy activities that help in our mission to fight flu on national, regional, and local levels.

Our future plans for this program include:

- Building upon the pilot program framework to identify additional Flu Champions such as individuals, schools, health departments, and immunization coalitions to expand the program's footprint
- Developing and distributing a comprehensive advocate handbook containing “how-to” guides for community-level immunization clinics, educational workshops, social media engagement, policy issues, etc.
- Developing online training modules (webinars) for Flu Champions to become FFF spokespeople and community “educators”
- Refining our library of flu-related educational materials for target demographics
- Distributing advocacy toolkits and educational materials to new and existing Flu Champions



- Using a private Facebook community group to share ideas and success stories (moderated by FFF staff)
- Creating a special community newsletter distribution for hot topics & alerts

Are you interested in becoming a Flu Champion? Email contact@familiesfightingflu.org or visit our [website](#) to learn more about how to get involved in this program.



Spotlight on Family Stories

We've added two new stories to our gallery on the FFF website:

- [Julianna Spencer](#), a four-year-old who lost her life to flu this past flu season on December 28, 2019.
- [Reese Pena](#), a two-year-old who lost her life to flu on December 19, 2013.

Read and share their stories to help raise awareness about the dangers of flu and the importance of annual flu vaccination!



Join our new Facebook group!

Are you a Flu Fighter? If so, we welcome you to join our new Facebook group, **Flu Fighting Forum**. We plan to use this group to keep folks updated on flu and share ways to get involved in flu advocacy, prevention, and education. Content includes:

- Shareable social media content
- Policy issues and sign-on petitions
- CDC flu burden updates
- News articles and research
- Discussions about best practices for discussing flu and flu vaccination
- Advocacy tools and resources

Join our group [here!](#)

Make a Tax-Deductible Donation

Families Fighting Flu operates solely on donations from individuals and organizations who support our mission and share our goals.

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