

Evolution of Influenza Vaccination Policies and Processes at U.S. Home Health Agencies: An Analysis of National Surveys in 2019 and 2023

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BACKGROUND

- ✓ Infections, especially during influenza (flu) season, contribute significantly to hospitalizations among older, chronically ill home health care (HHC) patients.
- ✓ Staff vaccinations play an important role in infection prevention and control (IPC) for HHC agencies.
- ✓ The impact of COVID-19 and mandatory healthcare worker vaccinations on HHC staff flu vaccination policies and processes remains unclear.

OBJECTIVE

To describe the evolution of staff flu vaccination policies/processes at U.S. HHC agencies, and any differences by ownership and geographic locations.



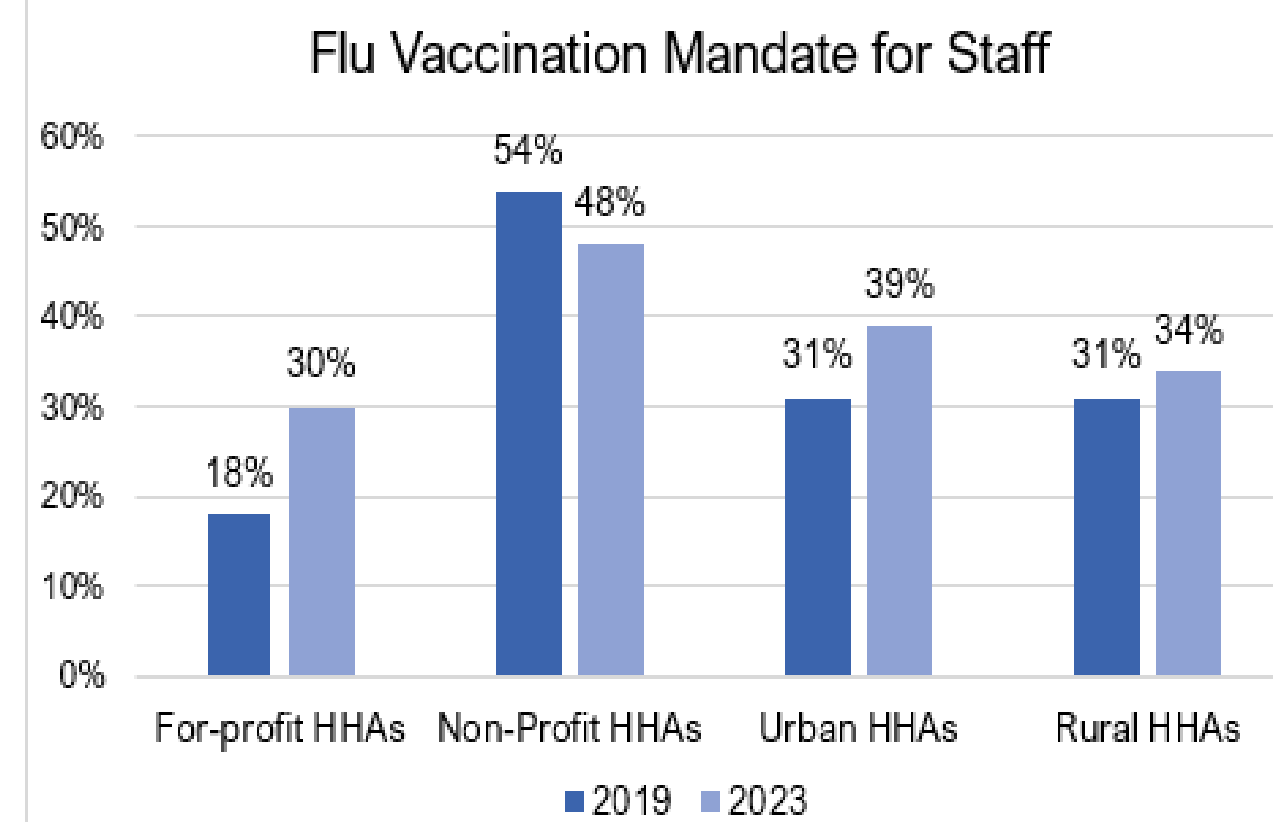
METHODS

- ✓ We conducted national surveys of Medicare-certified HHC agencies in **2019¹** and **2023** examining IPC policies and processes.
- ✓ **1,506** and **1,501** U.S. HHC agencies (including Puerto Rico) were included in the 2019 and 2023 samples, respectively, stratified by key characteristics for national representativeness.
 - Rural agencies were oversampled.
- ✓ Questions were asked about IPC staffing, policies and procedures, compliance monitoring and staff training.
- ✓ Agency administrators/clinical managers were invited to complete the survey via paper or online (Qualtrics).
- ✓ Descriptive statistics were calculated via Stata 17.

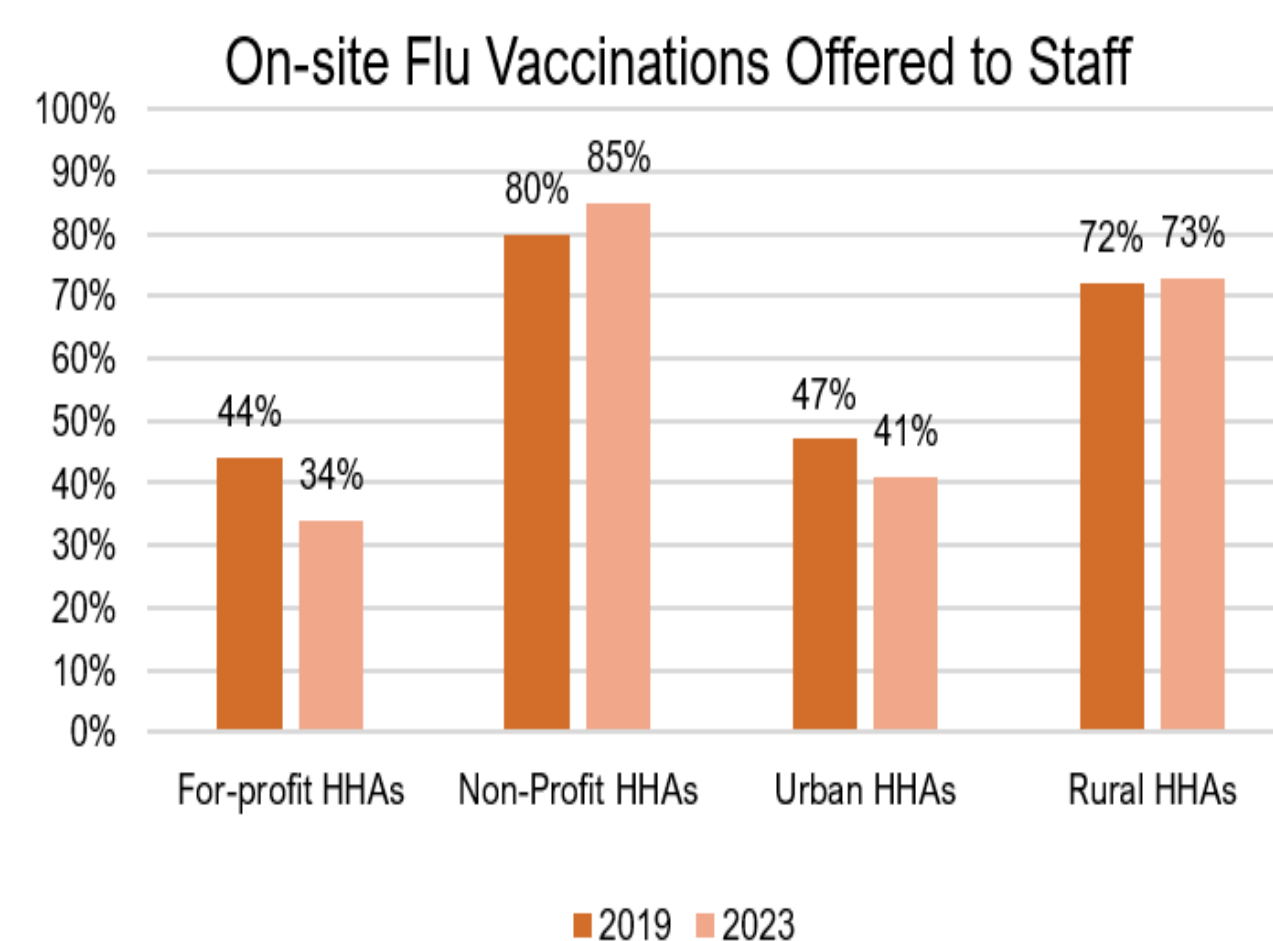
RESULTS

- ✓ Our 2019 survey had a 35.6% response rate, while we achieved a 30.5% response rate with the 2023 survey.
 - 64.4% (2019) and 72.0% (2023) of responding HHAs had for-profit ownership.
 - 39.7% (2019) and 30.1% (2023) were located in rural areas.

Does the agency do any of the following to encourage employees' flu vaccinations? (Mark all that apply)

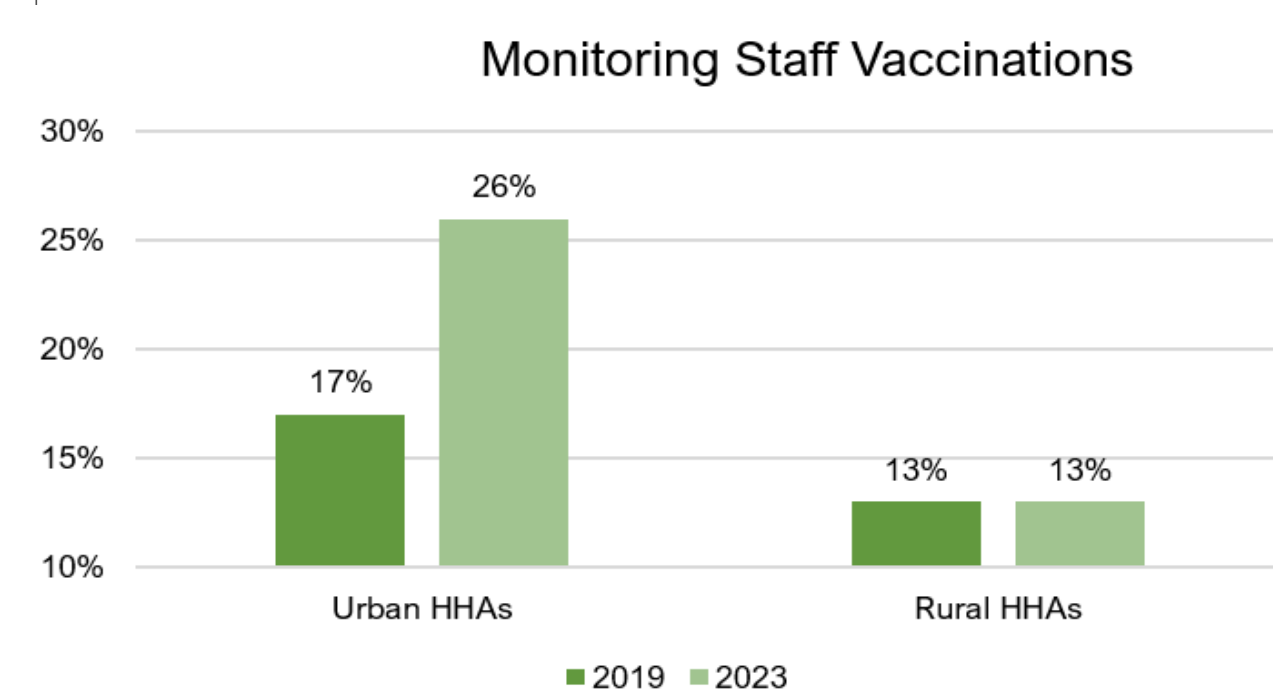


- While **more for-profit, urban, and rural HHAs now mandate flu vaccinations** for staff, fewer non-profit HHAs have required mandatory vaccination since 2019.



- **Rural HHAs have consistently offered on-site staff flu vaccinations.** For-profit HHAs and urban HHAs saw a decrease in offering on-site flu vaccinations to staff, while non-profit HHAs increased their offerings.

What are infection control-related activities that take up the most time at the agency?



- **More urban HHAs reported that time is spent monitoring staff vaccinations,** while rural HHAs saw no change.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Influenza vaccine hesitancy amongst healthcare workers often stems from misinformation about the vaccine, low social pressure, and lack of access to vaccination facilities.²
 - HHC staff who are hesitant to get vaccinated are also less likely to advocate for vaccination to their patients.³
- ✓ Rurality and profit status matter with respect to HHA encouragement of employees' flu vaccinations.
 - Profit status is often associated with quality of care, where for-profit HHAs score lower on quality metrics than non-profit HHAs.⁴
- ✓ Here, we saw an increase in mandatory flu vaccinations, with the exception of non-profit HHAs.
 - However, non-profits increased their encouragement of vaccinations in other ways, like offering free vaccinations on-site.
 - Encouragement of employees' flu vaccinations has been a consistent finding in the 2019 and 2023 surveys among non-profit HHAs, compared to for-profits.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

- ✓ The noticeable improvement in flu vaccination policies highlight the adaptability of HHAs and underscores the importance of continuous improvement in IPC practices.
- ✓ We recommend targeted policy interventions to enhance vaccination policies, ultimately improving patient care and clinical outcomes.

References

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