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## IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT FLU VACCINE FOR 2011-2012 SEASON

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2011

The Peabody Health Department would like to inform residents of some important changes in the distribution of free, state-supplied influenza (flu) vaccine for the 2011-2012 flu season.

In past years, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has provided free, state-supplied flu vaccine to local health departments for distribution to priority groups. Traditionally, senior citizens and adults with chronic illnesses have been among the highest priority groups and the first to be offered vaccine.

This year, the MDPH has informed all the local Health Departments in Massachusetts that, due to budget constraints, all Health Departments will be receiving less than half of the amount of state-supplied flu vaccine that was provided by the MDPH last year. The MDPH has also stated that the state-supplied flu vaccine **MUST** be targeted to individuals without health insurance, or individuals who have insurance that does not cover vaccinations.

**Individuals with health insurance or insured through government programs should make arrangements to receive the flu vaccine from their own primary care providers or alternative sites such as pharmacies.**

Sharon Cameron, Director of Health for the City of Peabody, stated, "For many years, the Peabody Health Department has been a primary provider of free flu vaccine for our residents, and we regret that we need to scale back on providing this important public service. Flu vaccine is now widely available through doctor's offices and at local pharmacies, and we hope that our residents will continue to receive the vaccine at these locations. We thank you for your understanding as we continue to work together to improve the health of our community."

Traditionally, flu vaccine is offered early in the fall and continues through the winter months. However, the Peabody Health Department is sending out this advisory notice early to ensure that all residents have the information they need in order to make alternative arrangements to receive flu vaccine for this coming season.

Seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for everyone ages 6 months and over. The Peabody Health Department urges residents to continue to receive the flu vaccine annually through their health care providers or pharmacy.

If you need assistance finding a health care provider or have any questions about this important change, please contact the Peabody Health Department at (978) 538-5758.