

Families Rejoice in CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Vote for Universal Childhood Influenza Vaccination

Families Fighting Flu, Inc. Recognizes Importance of Protecting Children from Deadly Influenza Virus

ATLANTA, Ga., February 27, 2008 — *Families Fighting Flu, Inc.*, fully supports today's vote by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to expand the current influenza vaccination recommendations to include all children ages six months to 18 years. Previous recommendations have included all children aged six months to 59 months. This new recommendation will be implemented as soon as feasible, but no later than the 2009-2010 influenza season.

"This is a very exciting day for Families Fighting Flu, as this monumental vote is critical to the wellbeing of millions of children," said Richard Kanowitz, president of Families Fighting Flu; his four-year-old daughter, Amanda, died from influenza in 2004. "Today's vote emphasizes the importance of vaccinating all children six months and older against the flu in order to protect them and their families from this potentially deadly virus. We strongly urge all parents to recognize the severity of influenza and get their children vaccinated against the flu every year," continued Kanowitz.

Children have the highest rates of influenza infection of any age group, with more than 20,000 children under the age of five hospitalized due to the flu each year. In fact, children are two-to-three times more likely to develop influenza than adults because of their less-developed immune systems. In addition, school-aged children tend to have higher rates of influenza infection because of their close contact with friends and classmates who frequently spread germs to one another. The flu vaccine can help children stay free of influenza during the flu season, and potentially help stop the spread of the virus to families and communities.

"More than 300 children have died from influenza over the past four flu seasons," said Diane McGowan, board member of Families Fighting Flu; her 15-year-old son, Martin, died from influenza in 2005. "Each death is an unnecessary loss that impacts a family, a school, and a community. This universal childhood recommendation will result in many more children being vaccinated and thus more lives being saved. I can't help but think that had a recommendation been in place when Martin was alive I would have had him vaccinated and he may still be here today," continued McGowan.

About *Families Fighting Flu, Inc.*

Families Fighting Flu, Inc. (FFF) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization established in 2004, that is made up of families and healthcare practitioners who have experienced first-hand the death of a child due to the flu, or have had a child experience severe medical complications from the flu. FFF is dedicated to educating people about the severity of influenza and the importance of vaccinating children against the flu every year. Through education and advocacy, we hope to improve the rates of annual childhood influenza vaccinations and help reduce the number of childhood illnesses and deaths caused by the flu each year. For more information about Families Fighting Flu, go to www.familiesfightingflu.org.

Families Fighting Flu, Inc. is made possible by unrestricted grants from MedImmune, Inc., GlaxoSmithKline, sanofi pasteur, Novartis Vaccines, CSL Biotherapies, and The Clorox Company.