



PANDEMIC FLU

A PLANNING GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

What is a Flu Pandemic?

An influenza (flu) pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new flu virus appears that can spread easily from person to person. Because people have not been exposed to this new virus before, they have little or no immunity to the virus; therefore serious illness or death is more likely to result than during seasonal flu.

It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. In addition, a pandemic may come and go in waves, each of which can last months at a time. The effects of a pandemic can be lessened if preparations are made ahead of time.

The illness rates for both seasonal and pandemic influenza are high among children, and schools are likely to be an important contributor to the spread of influenza in a community.

Scientific models support school closure as an effective means of reducing overall illness rates within communities and suggest that the value of this intervention is greatest if school closure occurs early in the course of a community outbreak.



“Educators must be integrally involved in state and local efforts to plan and prepare for a potential pandemic.”

– Secretary Margaret Spellings,
March 2006



www.pandemicflu.gov

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Differences between seasonal flu and pandemic flu:

Seasonal Flu



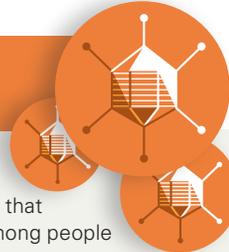
THE VIRUS

- Caused by influenza viruses that are closely related to viruses that have previously circulated; most people will have some immunity to it.
- Symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, and muscle pain.
- Complications such as pneumonia are most common in the very young and very old and may result in death.
- Vaccine is produced each season to protect people from the three influenza strains predicted to be most likely to cause illness.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

- Seasonal flu kills about 36,000 Americans each year and hospitalizes more than 200,000 children and adults.

Mild to Moderate Pandemic



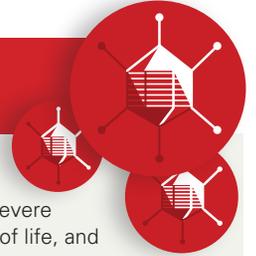
THE VIRUS

- Caused by a new influenza virus that has not previously circulated among people and that can be easily spread.
- Because most people will have no immunity to the new virus, it will likely cause illness in high numbers of people and more severe illness and deaths than seasonal influenza.
- Symptoms are similar to seasonal flu, but may be more severe and have more frequent serious complications.
- Healthy adults may be at increased risk for serious complications.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

- May cause a moderate impact on society (e.g., some short-term school closings, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home).

Severe Pandemic

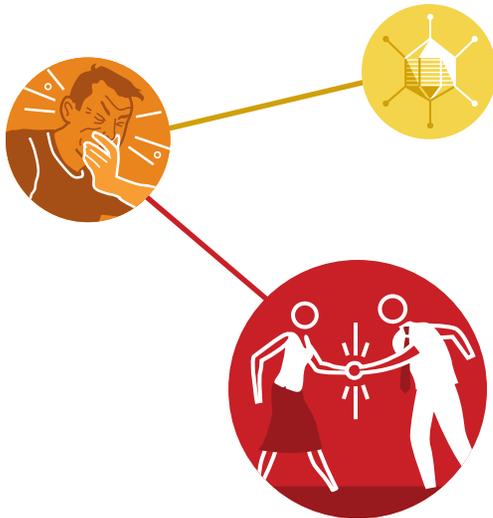


THE VIRUS

- A severe strain causes more severe illness, results in greater loss of life, and has a greater impact on society.
- During the peak of a severe pandemic, workplace absenteeism could reach up to 40% due to people being ill themselves or caring for family members.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

- Schools and day care/child care facilities may be closed.
- Public and social gatherings will be discouraged.
- The patterns of daily life could be changed for some time with basic services and access to supplies possibly disrupted.



How does influenza spread?

Human influenza virus is mainly transmitted from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A lesser mode of transmission occurs when a person touches something that has the flu viruses on it and then touches his or her mouth or nose. Some individuals who are infected may never show symptoms or have mild symptoms, but could still spread the virus to others.

When a pandemic begins, a virus-specific vaccine may not be available until 4-6 months after identification of a pandemic virus.



The supply of antiviral drugs will likely be limited throughout the pandemic. Moreover, scientists cannot be certain that antiviral drugs will be effective against a pandemic virus. For these reasons, infection control and social distancing measures will be the keys to limiting transmission, delaying the spread of the virus, and protecting people. Social distancing is a measure to decrease the frequency of contact among people in order to diminish the risk of spread of communicable diseases.

Measures to limit the spread of the flu:

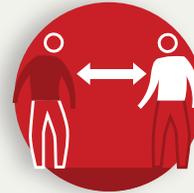
Severe Pandemic:

All of the seasonal and mild to moderate flu methods plus:

- Possible extended school closure, which could range from weeks to up to 3 months. Presently, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Education, and other agencies are conducting a comprehensive review of school closure and its feasibility and effects in mitigating a severe pandemic. The results of this study will be shared in the coming months.
- Promote social distancing of children and teens outside the school setting by reducing their social circulation and contacts to the greatest extent possible. This could include canceling extracurricular activities.



School Closure



Social Distancing

Mild to Moderate Pandemic:

All of the seasonal flu methods plus the following:

- Encourage the use of social distancing at the work place, at school and in the community.
- Possible school closure for a short amount of time (possibly days to a couple of weeks).
- Work with community flu-planning team to assess whether any additional measures should be taken.



Assess Measures

Seasonal Flu:

- Promote hand washing and cough hygiene via school-wide campaigns and modeling by school staff.
- Encourage vaccination of staff and students for whom the flu vaccine is recommended.
- Persons developing symptoms at school should be sent home as soon as possible and instructed by appropriate officials not to return until they are well.



Promote hygiene



Encourage vaccination



Stay at home

Infection control

The primary strategies for preventing spread of pandemic influenza:

Persons with flu symptoms should:

- Stay at home;
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing;
- Wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers frequently; and
- Try to maintain spatial separation of at least three feet from others if possible.

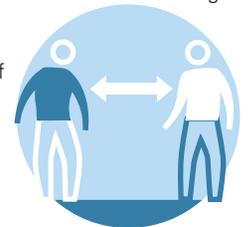
Hand, Cough and Sneeze Hygiene

- When sneezing or coughing, cover the nose and mouth with a tissue or upper arm if a tissue is not available.
- Dispose of used tissues in a wastebasket and wash hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing nose.
- Use warm water and soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizers to clean hands.
- Wash hands before eating or touching eyes, nose, or mouth.



Social distancing

In a pandemic, the risk of getting the flu is greatest when one has close contact with an infected person. Social distancing measures such as school closure, telecommuting or staggered shifts for the workforce, and cancellation of public gatherings may be effective in reducing transmission risks.



Basic Components of Pandemic Planning

Every district should have an Emergency Management Plan that:



- Addresses all four phases of emergency management planning (Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.)
- Is flexible enough to address multiple hazards (be “all-hazard plans.”)
- Is practiced on a regular basis.
- Is developed in an interactive, cross-cutting manner, in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders.
- Is based upon sound data and information.
- Includes provisions for being continually reviewed and updated regularly.
- Is coordinated with community pandemic influenza planning efforts, as well as state policy and planning efforts.



Pandemic Plan

This plan is built upon components in existing emergency management plans and would contain elements unique to an influenza pandemic.



Communication Plan

- Identify audiences and key messages (students parents, staff, etc.)
- Focus on clear, accurate, consistent, and timely communications.
- Identify trusted spokesperson (also, identify who will be lead for health matters.)
- Identify trusted media partners.
- Establish redundant communications methods identified in advance (primary, secondary and tertiary methods identified and all parties are familiar with them.)



Plan for continuity of learning or instruction

- Consider alternate learning strategies.
- Consider potential restructuring of school calendar.



Identify stakeholders and partners Identify a contact within the local public health department

and collaborate with that entity to create complementary plans, coordinate with other partners, and communicate consistently with the public.

Identify and coordinate with other key stakeholders

, such as law enforcement, school security personnel, local emergency management office, businesses, community and faith-based organizations.



Review and refine policies and authorities

Review school district’s or school’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and Business Continuity Plans (BCP), which outline procedures for continued function during an extended emergency. Consider:

- Essential functions, goods, and services that must be maintained under a variety of conditions;
- Essential tasks that can be performed from other locations such as home, as well as technology support necessary to implement such measures;
- Essential people and material support;
- Delegations of authority and
- Personnel/Human Resources policies (leave, disability, payroll, potential high absenteeism).

Identify legal authorities for school closures, limitations on responsibilities and functions (such as school lunch provision), and school’s potential responsibilities and liabilities.

Review and refine supply policies and contracts including potentially ordering and warehousing items such as tissues, soap, or hand sanitizer.



Initiate or expand prevention and education efforts

- Conduct preventive hand-washing and cough/sneezing etiquette campaigns.
- Encourage staff, faculty, and students to stay home when ill.
- Provide information to parents, staff and students about elements of pandemic plan.



Create and implement a surveillance system

in partnership with state and/or local health departments to identify and track student absences due to illness, which would allow the rapid detection of unusual changes or trends in student health.



Develop an Incident Command System (ICS)

specific to a pandemic, that identifies roles and responsibilities of educators, law enforcement, and health officials in advance of an incident.



Consider and plan with community partners to address issues specific to your school environment,

- such as:
- Students with special needs, including those who are in special education, receiving supplemental services at school, English Language Learners, or have special health care needs;
 - Working with Child Nutrition Directors to help families identify sources for feeding programs for students who receive meals at school in the event of long-term school closures;
 - Potential social services needed during and after pandemic has ended;
 - Possible alternative uses of school buildings during a pandemic (such as for mass immunizations or hospitals);
 - Potential uses of school buses during pandemic and if/how this affects contracts;
 - Current alternative uses for schools and determine necessary policies/procedures under school closures;
 - Capacity to address requirements for cleaning the building if it was used for community health needs or if there were sick students;
 - Fiscal, academic, emotional and physical recovery issues, including;
 - Return to learning;
 - Ability of students, family, and staff to access available mental health supports, particularly during a crisis if schools are cancelled;
 - Bereavement needs; and
 - Availability of mental health service providers, including community and faith-based organizations.

