

NORTH CAROLINA'S OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS

The Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) formally declares the current global pandemic phase and adjusts the phase level to correspond with pandemic conditions around the world. For each phase, the global influenza preparedness plan identifies response measures WHO will take, and recommends that countries around the world should implement.

PANDEMIC PHASES	NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOL GOALS
<p><i>Interpandemic Period</i></p> <p><i>Phase 1-</i> No new influenza virus subtypes detected in humans. An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection or disease is considered low.</p> <p><i>Phase 2-</i> No new influenza virus subtypes detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses substantial risk of human disease.</p>	<p>Ensure that staff members and students are trained in preventative measures such as respiratory etiquette and universal precautions.</p> <p>Minimize the risk of transmission to humans; ensure that staff members understand detection and reporting guidelines and report rapidly as required.</p>
<p><i>Pandemic Alert Period</i></p> <p><i>Phase 3-</i> Human infection(s) are occurring with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact.</p> <p><i>Phase 4-</i> Small cluster(s) of human infection with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.</p> <p><i>Phase 5-</i> Larger cluster(s) of human infection but human-to-human spread is localized; suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk).</p>	<p><i>The NC State Board of Education (NCSBE) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) will ensure that:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All personnel are knowledgeable about the latest epidemiological information. 2. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) review and update business continuity plans. 3. Best practices for infection detection and control measures are followed. 4. Adequate resources are available for staff/student protection. 5. LEAs implementing best practices for social distancing techniques per state guidelines, including the school activity calendar. 6. That LEAs maximize communications with parents related to health and safety.
<p><i>Pandemic Period</i></p> <p><i>Phase 6-</i> Pandemic is declared. Increased and sustained transmission in the general population.</p>	<p><i>The NCSBE and the NCDPI will ensure that LEAs :</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will implement increased surveillance of staff/student health and attendance and implement administrative procedures to ensure adequate staffing for essential business and schools functions. 2. Follow local health and emergency guidelines pertaining to social distancing, isolation and quarantine measures. 3. Maximum support and education for ill and affected students.

The NCDHHS has identified schools as sentinel reporters to monitor school absenteeism. School absenteeism in the winter months generally correlates with the level of influenza in the community.

SURVEILLANCE DURING PHASES 1, 2, AND 3

All public schools within North Carolina are asked to report, on a voluntary basis, absenteeism of 10% or more of the school population each week from approximately November through April. The report should be sent to the local health departments and NCDPI.

SURVEILLANCE DURING PHASES 4, 5, AND 6

As a sentinel reporter, each school will closely monitor and report attendance and data trends when student absentee rates rise above 10%.

The human resources department for each LEA will activate tracking of absenteeism for school and central staff, and report trends.

During a pandemic, the presence of overlapping authorities will necessitate close communication and coordination between elected leaders, state officials, the local health director, and local school administrators to ensure decisions and response actions are clear and consistent. There are two state statutes that give both the state and local health directors and the State Board of Education the authority to close schools. The state health director and the local health directors are empowered to exercise quarantine and isolation authority which could include the prerogative to close schools, GS 130A-145. GS 115C-84.2, subsection (c), the school calendar law, provides "During any period of emergency in any section of the State where emergency conditions make it necessary, the State Board of Education may order general, and if necessary, extended recesses or adjournment of the public schools."

Communications with the public and health care providers will be one of the most critical strategies for containing the spread of the influenza and for managing the utilization of health care services.

COMMUNICATIONS DURING PHASES 1, 2, AND 3

The NCDPI and SBE will assist local school systems in the communications with education providers, public officials, schools and emergency responders about influenza pandemics and steps they should take to plan for pandemic outbreaks.

Action Steps for LEAs:

- Assess the information needs of the school community.
- Intensify public education efforts about influenza pandemics and steps that can be taken to reduce exposure to infection. Information may be disseminated via web site postings, parent letters, or school newsletters, television and radio broadcasts.

- LEAs will identify hard-to-reach families and ensure communications in the home language.
- Coordinated the development of common health messages and education materials in multiple languages. Ensure that bilingual staff can serve as information conduits to vulnerable school families and build sustainable preparedness capabilities.
- Develop template pandemic information letter, including translations, for parents/guardians.

COMMUNICATIONS DURING PHASES 4, 5, AND 6

The NCDPI and NCSBE will assist local school systems in communications with education providers, public officials, schools and emergency responders about influenza pandemics and steps they should take to plan for pandemic outbreaks.

The LEA will develop a communications strategy including identifying the appropriate community partners for reaching and educating diverse communities such as limited English speaking and homeless students and their families. LEAs will assist in translations for the school community.

Local administrators will evaluate the need to establish a school information call center to respond to public inquiries. Local administrators will disseminate web alerts per guidelines. Pandemic letters will be sent out to parent/guardians per guidelines and local LEA policy.