

# 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.

### 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.

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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.

### Measures to Limit the Spread of 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.

## 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).

### Measures to Limit the Spread of Mild to Moderate Pandemic Flu

#### All of the seasonal flu methods plus:

- 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.

## 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.

### Measures to Limit the Spread of 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.



# PANDEMIC FLU

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## 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.
- 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.



## **INFECTION CONTROL IN THE SCHOOL: PROTECTING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS**

- 1** Encourage staff and students to wash their hands using soap and water before eating and after using the toilet. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- 2** Teach students to wash their hands for 15 to 20 seconds, long enough to sing “the ABCs song” twice.
- 3** Ensure that sink locations and restrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels or working hand dryers.
- 4** Encourage students and staff to use a paper towel to open restroom doors after washing their hands. Place a garbage can near the restroom exit to facilitate ease of paper towel disposal.
- 5** Clean frequently touched surfaces and shared items daily using an approved tuberculocidal agent that kills hepatitis B virus or a chlorine (bleach) and water solution of 1:10 parts. Keep cleaning supplies out of reach of children.
- 6** Encourage parents of ill students to keep their children home.
- 7** Encourage ill staff to stay home. Establish non-punitive sick leave policies during a pandemic.
- 8** Encourage staff and students to cover their coughs and sneezes using tissues or shirt sleeves, not their hands. Have waste cans for immediate disposal of tissues and encourage hand washing with soap and water.
- 9** Educate parents about respiratory etiquette and hand washing at home and their importance in disease prevention. Encourage parents to model the desired behavior for their children.



# BASIC COMPONENTS OF PANDEMIC PLANNING

## Every district should have an Emergency Management Plan that:

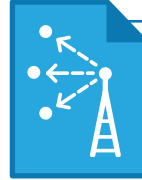


- Addresses all four phases of emergency management planning (Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery).
- Is flexible enough to address multiple hazards (be “all-hazard plans”).
- Is practiced on a regular basis.
- Is developed in an interactive, cross-cutting manner, in collaboration 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.

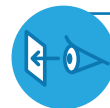
### Review and refine supply policies and contracts

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.



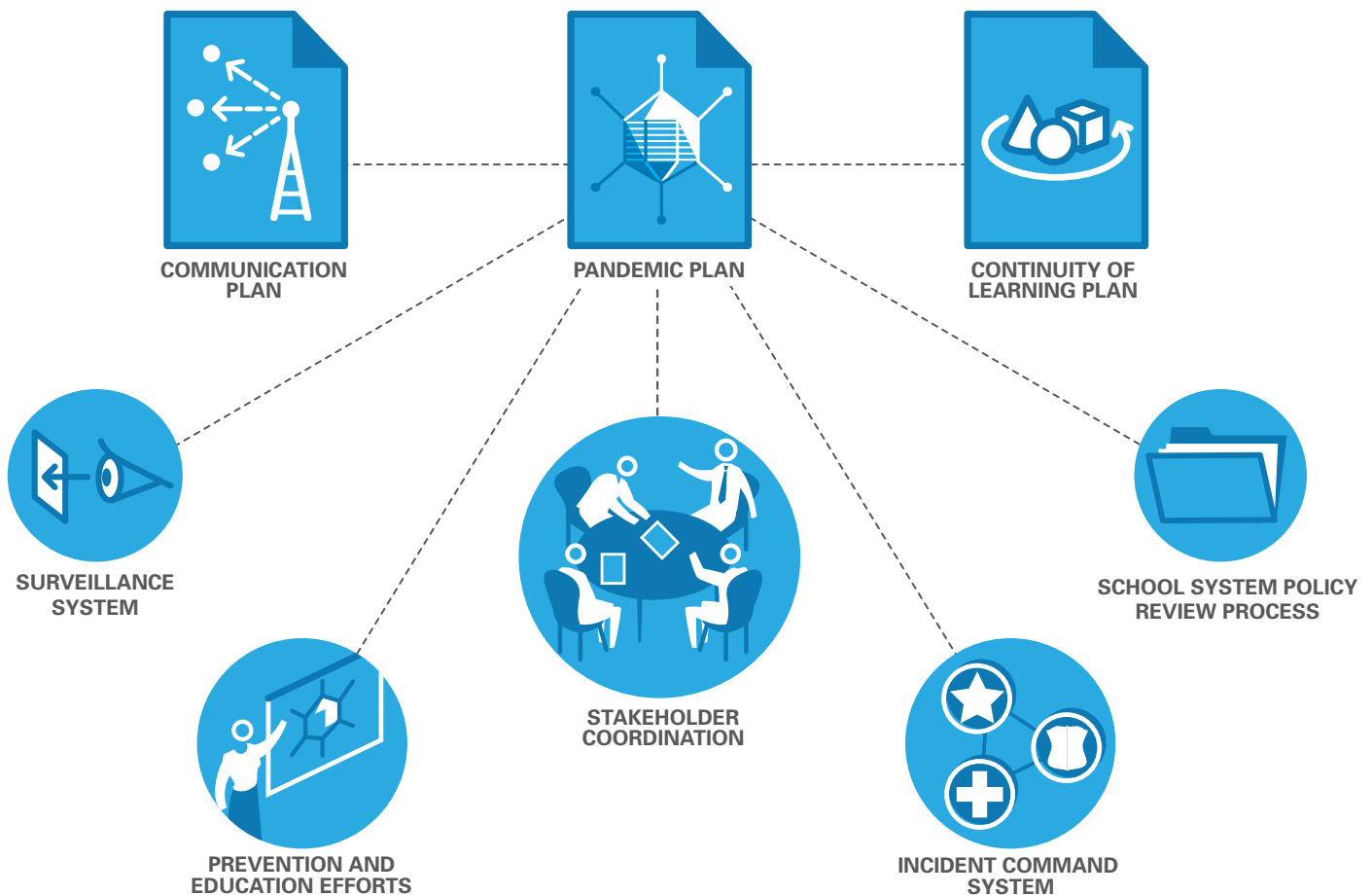
### Consider and plan with community partners to address issues specific to your school environment

- , 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.

# BASIC COMPONENTS OF PANDEMIC PLANNING



- Every district should have an Emergency Management Plan.
- The plan should be flexible to encompass all hazards.
- Every district should develop a Pandemic Flu Plan.
- Plans should address four phases of emergency management planning: Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. For more information: [www.ed.gov/emergencyplan](http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan).
- Plans should be practiced on a regular basis.
- Plans should be developed and communicated in an interactive manner with stakeholders, including parents, faculty, other community partners and first responders.
- Plans should be based on sound data and information; [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) should be the main resource for pandemic planning and information.
- Plans should be continually reviewed and updated as new information is available. The complete planning checklist can be viewed at [www.pandemic.flu.gov](http://www.pandemic.flu.gov).



Detailed information on each component along with sample plans can be viewed at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov).

# PANDEMIC FLU

## EXAMPLES OF STATE AND LOCAL PANDEMIC PLANS AND PLANNING EFFORTS



The U.S. Department of Education has gathered information on state and local pandemic planning efforts to help others begin or refine their pandemic influenza plans. After examining plans and information from school districts across the country, a panel of experts in the field of emergency management identified examples of strong

planning efforts or useful resources. As with all emergency management plans, these plans and efforts are works in progress. They can be found at:

**<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/sampleplans/index.html>**

Copies of this packet can be accessed online at:  
<http://www.nchealthyschools.org/tools/>



# PANDEMIC FLU AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENTS



### PRE-PANDEMIC

- Educate transportation employees about the risk of pandemic flu, how it is transmitted and actions to be taken to avoid infection.
- Educate transportation employees about the overall potential societal impact during widespread infection in a community.

### EARLY INFECTION STAGES – SCHOOLS STILL OPEN FOR STUDENTS

- Monitor transportation employees to determine those unavailable due to infection and adjust routes as needed (travel only main roads, adjust school schedules, etc.).
- Provide infection-prevention supplies to school bus drivers and other transportation staff.
- Provide education to bus drivers on whether to provide transportation to students that are or may be infected.
- Make contact with local emergency management personnel to determine transportation needs if there is widespread infection in the community.
- Maximize amount of fuel stored by LEA to be prepared for long-term crisis.

### INFECTION STAGE – SCHOOL CLOSED FOR STUDENTS

- Discuss need for vehicles, fuel, etc., with local emergency management personnel. School buses and other vehicles may be used in an officially declared state of emergency. Cost of operation is to be reimbursed to the school district.
- Continually replenish fuel to the extent possible.
- Identify personnel to operate vehicles needed for an emergency and provide them with supplies or medication to reduce the risk of infection.
- Coordinate use of school vehicles with emergency management personnel.
- Monitor status of transportation employees to be sure buses can be operational at the time that school is reopened.



# PANDEMIC FLU AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS



***Implementation of the strategies listed below may be dependent on the Pandemic Severity Index and the LEA Influenza Pandemic Plan. Communication and an understanding of your role and responsibilities are vital to maintain the integrity of your program and the trust of your community.***

### CONTACTS/COMMUNICATION

- Know who the members of the Pandemic Planning team are for your LEA/school and how to contact them. Attend meetings and stay informed.
- Develop a list of contacts, including the local health department, emergency management, law enforcement, community leaders, and environmental health.
- Know who and how to contact State Agency personnel at work, at home and by mobile phone.
- Know who and how to contact your employees at work, at home and by mobile phone. Keep additional emergency contacts on file.
- Develop a list of contacts for your suppliers at work, at home and by mobile phone. Be sure to have more than one contact per vendor or supplier.
- Keep copies of your contact lists at work and at home. Be sure other responsible individuals in your office have access to contact lists, as well.
- Participate in pandemic planning, exercises, and educational opportunities.

### STUDENT DISMISSAL

Should the severity of the pandemic reach 2 or 3, students may be dismissed from school for up to four weeks. Should the severity reach 4 or 5, students may be dismissed from school for 12 weeks or more.

- Consider how current food and supply inventory, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), food preparation, etc., will be affected if meals must be prepared and served in non-traditional methods:

- served in the cafeteria for increased number of lunch periods to smaller groups of students (ex.: three, 30-minute lunch periods serving 100 students in each period may be converted to ten, 20-minute lunch periods serving 30 students in each period);
- transported for classroom service;
- prepared by minimal staff, substitutes, or untrained personnel;
- communal feeding (ex.: cafeterias are requested to provide meals for members of the community in the cafeteria or alternate sites in the community); and
- meals when school is dismissed (ex.: cafeterias are requested to provide meals to students even though school is dismissed).
- Consider how current food supply may be affected:
  - Develop procedures that assure use of perishable foods first during pandemic feeding to reduce food loss.
  - Consider strategies to address and compensate for food shortages that may develop (ex.: late or no deliveries, delivery shortages).
  - Contact numbers are necessary so that your vendors may reach you and you may contact them.
- Consider how your facility may be used during a pandemic event, who will make that decision, who will contact you, and how much lead time you will need to prepare:
  - operations center;
  - emergency shelter;
  - quarantine;
  - emergency hospital; and/or
  - morgue.

- Consider the health of your employees:
  - Develop and implement effective infection prevention policies and procedures to limit the spread of influenza (ex.: soap, hot water, individual drying towels, hand sanitizing products, and tissues).
  - Establish policies to address sick leave for staff due to pandemic influenza. Voluntary absences/isolation for personal illness and illness in the employee's family is encouraged to reduce spread of the flu (ex.: non-punitive, liberal leave).
  - Consider the impact of, and help employees prepare for, reduced wages should extended absences occur due to employee illness or school dismissal.
  - Determine how extended leave will affect employee benefits.
  - Keep employees informed about policies. Recommend taking a day a month without pay vs. annual leave. As annual leave accumulates, the employee is better prepared financially for an extended sick leave or unplanned "pandemic" vacation.
  - Develop a list of employees with a bus license should it be necessary to transport meals.
  - Develop a list of substitute employees should your staff become ill.
  - Develop basic instructions on use and care of industrial equipment in your kitchens and have them immediately available should untrained personnel be responsible for meal preparation.
- Consider strategies to cope with infrastructure issues:
  - No water (ex.: keep 1-gallon/5-gallon bottled water on hand for ware-washing and basic sanitation. Additional individual bottled water for drinking is recommended).
  - No power (ex.: research alternatives for refrigerated/frozen foods as well as alternative cooking/preparation methods).
  - No gas (ex.: research alternative cooking/preparation methods).
  - No law enforcement (ex.: secure doors, locks, gates, etc. Set alarms and properly store food, supplies and equipment to deter theft.).
- Plan ahead and prepare employees. Provide them with resources to begin personal preparations in their homes. Encourage employees to begin plans to address child care.
- If school meals cannot be provided by the Child Nutrition department, determine other types of community nutrition assistance for students and how this information will be disseminated.
- Consider the effect of pandemic influenza and subsequent school dismissal and employee illness on the viability of your Safety Management Plan (SMP):
  - Revenues may decrease while the personnel and food/supply expenses for the program stay constant or increase.
  - Additional duties or responsibilities may be requested from the Child Nutrition department. Identify sources of revenue to compensate for any expense incurred (ex. Red Cross).

## RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide your plans to Pandemic Planning team in your LEA/school and to your employees. Get them prepared and keep them informed throughout the event. (Spread facts, not fear.)
- Plan ahead for ways to address food/labor shortages in schools (ex.: shift employees from one school to another to cover jobs, convert schools to central prep and finishing

