

Research

R E P O R T

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A Guide for School Board Pandemic Influenza Preparedness

by
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This resource outlines considerations and guidelines to assist school boards in pandemic planning. Included in the report is:

- ✓ Information regarding pandemic influenza.
- ✓ Suggestions for pre-planning preparedness.
- ✓ Suggested strategies for dealing with a pandemic.
- ✓ Key questions to be addressed.

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Sources:

Manitoba Health, Preparing for a Pandemic Influenza,
http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/documents/pandemic_school.pdf

University of Saskatchewan,
http://www.usask.ca/uofs/notices/pandemic/pandemic_workbook.pdf

Risk & Insurance Management Society,
<http://www.rims.org/education/onlinecourses/Pages/PandemicFlu.aspx>

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Preparedness Guidelines for Saskatchewan School Divisions and Schools (K - 12)

1. INTRODUCTION

Why should school divisions prepare for a pandemic? During a pandemic there are various effects that schools can help to mitigate. Schools can implement effective health practices and inform students, parents and others how to do so. Every person who does not become sick during the early stages of a pandemic might benefit from a vaccine once it is developed. Perhaps most importantly, schools can lessen potential societal disruption by continuing their operations as normally as possible. If community members feel confident in sending their children to school, they will be able to carry on with their own work as well.

These guidelines are aimed at public school divisions but will be useful with adaptations for independent schools. Pandemic influenza could cause a great deal of illness and death while affecting society's ability to function. Recognizing this, individuals are preparing to respond for when another pandemic arrives. School divisions and schools have emergency plans for a number of crises, but have not generally planned for a community-wide health emergency such as an influenza pandemic. **The purposes of these guidelines to help give Saskatchewan school leaders a broad understanding of the issues associated with pandemic influenza and to support their planning for educational continuity during a pandemic.** These *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Guidelines* are organized into three sections: Section One – Pandemic Influenza in Context – provides background on the nature of pandemic influenza, its general effects and management and Saskatchewan's preparations for coordinating a response. Section Two – Education System Planning – describes a process for preparatory planning, including the major impacts that schools will face and suggestions for dealing with them. Section Three – Preparedness – is a brief conclusion about maintaining the plan and training. The appendices provide a range of supplementary information about contacts, dealing with influenza and planning. Throughout the document are references to Internet information sources. Three of the most useful are the Government of Canada, Pandemic Planning & Responses http://www.influenza.gc.ca/plan_e.html, the Government of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Health website at <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/pandemic-planning>, and the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region at <http://www.rqhealth.ca/programs/pandemic/index>. Planning for a possible pandemic continues to evolve and is ongoing. A number of factors are unknown and some will not be known until the time of a pandemic. In Saskatchewan, the Emergency Measures Organization, the Ministry of Health and the various health regions across the province are continually refining their own plans and capacities. In fact, emergency planning is never "written in stone". Rather, it provides a context for more efficient problem solving at the time of an emergency. As a result, this document is not a final product. It will be updated as provincial plans develop and more detailed information will be distributed as a pandemic becomes imminent.

This document provides processes and structures to allow planning to start. However, to be responsive to local situations, a realistic pandemic preparation plan must be developed by each school division.

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA IN CONTEXT

1.1 Understanding the Hazard

This section provides some general background on influenza pandemic and its potential effects. Access the Government of Canada public health website at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/index_e.html for current information including fact sheets and preparedness guidelines. Until it occurs, no one knows exactly what the next pandemic will look like. A number of assumptions, based on previous pandemics and medical research have been made for planning purposes.

1.1.1 Characteristics of Pandemic Influenza

- What is a pandemic influenza? By definition, it is an epidemic that spreads throughout the world.
- “Influenza A” is the type of influenza virus involved in all known influenza pandemics. Influenza A viruses can undergo major changes or shifts in genetic makeup, producing a completely new strain for which most people have little or no specific immunity. As a result, large numbers of individuals become infected as it spreads.
- For an influenza virus to be considered a pandemic, it must be a new virus with the ability to spread efficiently among people, causing widespread illness and death.

1.1.1.1 Influenza Transmission

- The influenza virus enters the body through the nose, eyes or throat.
- When people with influenza cough or sneeze, large droplets containing the virus are produced and can travel up to one meter in the air.
- Inhaling these droplets or having them come into contact with your mouth, eyes or nose can result in infection. This can occur by:
 - hand-to-hand contact with infected individuals, or by
 - touching surfaces or handling objects contaminated by infected individuals
- Infected persons can be contagious from the day before they develop symptoms and up to seven days afterwards (typically three to five days in healthy adults and up to seven days in children) This timeframe may be longer for children and people with decreased immune system functioning.
- Not everyone who comes in contact with influenza virus will become ill. However, they may still spread it to others.

Planning Assumption:

Influenza spreads easily among people. People can be infected with influenza and spread it to others before they become ill. They can spread it to others even if they do not become ill.

1.1.1.2 Disease Symptoms

Once infected with influenza, it usually takes from one to three days to develop symptoms. Pandemic influenza is expected to cause symptoms similar to ordinary influenza, though illness may be more severe. Influenza symptoms include:

- Fever and a cough often accompanied by one or more of the following:
 - aching muscles and joints
 - headache
 - severe weakness and fatigue
 - sore throat and runny nose
- Among children, gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea vomiting and diarrhea (Gastrointestinal symptoms are uncommon in adults) Generally influenza (flu) symptoms can last four to seven days. A cough and general fatigue may persist for several weeks. Most people recover from influenza without medical intervention. However, some people particularly the very young the very old and those with compromised immune systems can develop complications including bacterial infections such as pneumonia, which can result in prolonged illness or even death.

Planning Tip:

Remember that when a pandemic does begin the disease assumptions will need to be checked against the latest information and plans updated as necessary. This information can be found at <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/pandemic-planning>

1.1.2 Impact on Society

Population

During a pandemic it is expected there will be a greater extent of illness and death than experienced during an ordinary influenza season. However, most people who get ill will recover. Public health experts assume that:

- 35 percent of people could become ill and of those who get sick 0.5 per cent could die.

Planning Assumption:

During a pandemic there will be more illness than during an ordinary influenza season. It has been estimated that 35 per cent of people could get sick enough to miss at least one half-day or more of work. While virtually no one will be immune to a pandemic strain of influenza virus, certain age groups will be affected more severely and have no way of predicting this in advance.

A pandemic influenza virus may have greater effects on groups who are at increased risk of influenza in annual outbreaks including the very young and the very old or may adversely affect different age groups. At the time of a pandemic, public health experts including epidemiologists will work together across international borders to identify what segments of our population are at increased risk of complications due to pandemic influenza and our response efforts will be adjusted accordingly

Area of Impact:

A pandemic will have an impact upon all of Saskatchewan and the rest of Canada, North America and the World. All areas of society, including school systems could be addressing the same issues within similar timeframes.

Planning Tip:

To learn more about influenza and pandemic influenza, consult with your regional health on the Internet at <http://www.rqhealth.ca/programs/pandemic/index>

Duration

A pandemic may occur over a two-year period. Based on previous experience pandemics may occur in waves with each wave lasting six to eight weeks and separated by three to nine months. A second wave may cause more serious illness and deaths than the first.

Warning Period

We anticipate having up to three months warning from the time a pandemic is declared by the World Health Organization until the virus arrives in Canada. This is based on the assumption that a pandemic will start elsewhere in the world, then spread to North America. It is possible that the warning period may be shorter.

1.1.3 Impact on Schools

Educational continuity in schools ultimately will be affected by:

- employee absenteeism,
- student absenteeism,
- interruption of services and supplies and reduction in outside supports,
- potential school closures,
- potential additional duties,
- financial losses or incremental costs,
- potential spread of infection at school and
- staff and students becoming ill at school.

Suggestions for dealing with these potential effects will be described later.

1.2 Management of Pandemic Influenza**1.2.1 Preventative Steps**

We are a considerably healthier population now than in the past and we have access to a wide range of interventions, such as antiviral drugs, vaccines and antibiotics, supported by a highly developed health care system. People should take steps to prevent themselves from becoming infected and from spreading infection to others. These include:

- making efforts to improve your general health status through healthy living behavior such as exercising, eating well, getting enough sleep and not smoking
- washing your hands often and teaching others to do the same.

- keeping your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes
- not sharing eating utensils or drinks, or school supplies such. As pencils or rulers or musical instruments with mouthpieces
- covering your cough
- getting a vaccine (when available)
- staying home if you are sick

These measures are recommended every year for annual influenza outbreaks to reduce your risk of getting or spreading influenza. For general prevention information see Appendix B (page 28) for advice on hand hygiene techniques see Appendix C (page 31)

1.2.1.1 Vaccine

Vaccination against influenza is the most effective tool to prevent infection with influenza and complications of the disease. Vaccines cause the production of antibodies against the specific strains of influenza virus contained in the vaccine, providing immunity. The vaccine does not contain live virus, so it cannot cause influenza. Influenza vaccines have been used for decades with great success in minimizing the impact of annually circulating influenza viruses as well as for recent pandemics. A new vaccine is produced each year to ensure people are protected against circulating influenza viruses, which undergo minor changes from year to year.

During a pandemic, a completely new influenza virus will be circulating among people around the world. It will be necessary to develop a completely new vaccine to protect people from the pandemic virus. It could take four to six months for a vaccine to be developed and become available. Saskatchewan Health's goal is to ensure all residents can receive the pandemic vaccine as quickly as possible once the vaccine becomes available. However, it is important to note that due to the need to produce an entirely new vaccine for a pandemic virus, the vaccine will be available in batches. In keeping with the rest of Canada, Saskatchewan will be immunized according to nationally agreed upon priority groups. While these groups are known at this point in time, adjustments may be deemed necessary at the time of a pandemic to protect those age groups at increased risk of illness and death. Again, we will not know who will be most severely affected until the time of a pandemic

1.2.2 Building Hygiene

Although it is impossible to maintain an infection-free building, there are some steps that can minimize and slow the spread of the virus. A list of specific suggestions is outlined in Appendix D (page 32).

1.2.3 Disease Management

Caring for Yourself if Sick

Appendix B (page 28) outlines ways to care for yourself when you have the flu.

Antiviral Drugs

Antiviral drugs are drugs used for the prevention and early treatment of influenza. If taken shortly after getting sick (within 48 hours), they can reduce influenza symptoms, shorten the length of the illness and potentially reduce any serious complications. Antiviral drugs work by reducing the ability of the virus to reproduce. However, they do not provide immunity from the virus. Planning for antiviral use during a pandemic is ongoing at the national level, however, it is most likely that antiviral drugs will be used at the beginning of a pandemic to treat people who become ill pending development of a vaccine.

Antibiotics

Influenza is caused by a virus, not bacteria, so antibiotics cannot be used to treat influenza specifically. However, antibiotics are very useful in treating bacterial complications of influenza such as pneumonia, which can result in prolonged illness or even death. The same will be true during a pandemic.

1.3 Pandemic Co-ordination

As with preparedness efforts, a response to pandemic influenza will occur in a national context. Canada co-operates with other countries. Each province or territory has responsibility for health care but acts within a national plan. Organizations (municipalities, regional health authorities, school divisions, independent schools, post-secondary institutions, businesses, and others) maintain their own services, but do so in co-operation with and, if necessary, under the direction of the provincial government.

Goals of a pandemic response in Canada, as outlined in the *Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector* are:

- to minimize serious illness and overall deaths, and,
- to minimize societal disruption among Canadians due to pandemic influenza.

Saskatchewan shares these goals for its pandemic response. While we cannot prevent a pandemic from occurring or stop it completely once it occurs, public health measures will be implemented to minimize the impact of a pandemic on the population. This includes slowing the spread to allow more time for vaccine production and implementation of mass immunization campaigns within Saskatchewan and across Canada.

1.3.1 Provincial Government Planning

1.3.1.1 Legislative Powers During Emergencies

During emergencies, governments may need to access powers that are not normally available and therefore require special legislation. The Government of Canada is able to invoke power through its *Emergencies Act* (formerly *The War Measures Act*). This act gives the Government of Canada powers that enable it to assist in the response to regional, national and international emergencies. The federal act prevails in the event of a conflict with any provincial emergency measures legislation.

Under the authority of *The Public Health Act*, public health officials in Saskatchewan have the authority to take actions to protect the health of the public. This could include closure of certain buildings or suspension of public gatherings, including schools. This legislated authority has been in place for many years and in practice is used only as deemed necessary to protect the health of the public. *The Public Health Act* will be a key public health tool during a pandemic. Municipal governments have access to emergency powers under *The Emergency Measures Act*. This legislation allows a municipal council to invoke powers (after a majority vote) such as public evacuation, building closures, trespassing on property without a search warrant and the authority to compel persons to assist in an emergency.

Government of Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan will establish an Incident Management System (IMS) during an influenza pandemic or any large scale emergency that affects the province. This system will provide a governance and problem-solving structure that will allow the Saskatchewan government to concentrate resources to manage the emergency. Who participates in the management of an emergency will depend on the sectors affected. During a pandemic influenza there will be several departments involved in managing the emergency to ensure that stakeholders receive the support, operational guidance and communications necessary to ensure the continuity of government services.

Saskatchewan Boards of Education

Boards of Education in Saskatchewan should develop business continuity plans to enable important supports to schools to continue during emergencies. This may include any necessary adaptations of school division policy and funding issues, assistance in resolving unanticipated difficulties, and communicating common education issues to government and communities to ensure the needs of schools are fully understood and addressed. Schools will not be automatically closed. The working expectation is that schools will continue to operate and provide an environment that is as safe as possible during a pandemic. Although the Ministry of Health, the Emergency Measures Organization, and the Ministry of Education, in Saskatchewan have the authority to close schools for health emergency response or educational reasons respectively the working expectation is that decisions about school closure will remain a local responsibility as much as possible. The possibility of school closure is a key reason for engaging in business and educational continuity planning.

1.3.1 Other Organizational Roles

1.3.1.1 Local Government

The role of a municipal or other local government during an emergency is to continue normal services. The municipal government is obligated to ensure that its citizens' basic humanitarian needs are supported during any emergency. These needs could include emergency social services.

1.3.1.2 Regional Health Authorities

During any emergency, the regional health authorities will continue to provide health services and will provide public health advice to local citizens, businesses and organizations. During a pandemic influenza, the regional health authority will also distribute and administer vaccines and antiviral medications. Each regional health authority has a Medical Officer of Health and public health doctors with expertise in areas such as controlling the spread of communicable diseases and authority to issue orders under *The Public Health Act*. Medical Officers of Health will have a key leadership role to play during a local response to a pandemic.

The following guidelines are based on an international model and language for emergency response planning. This model can be used by school divisions for all community-wide emergencies such as floods, severe storms or extended power outages. However, the particular example in this document is an influenza pandemic. Some of the language might be foreign to schools, but using the generic language enables educators to communicate more effectively with community partners and to understand their documents and systems. The model is based on “business continuity planning” and, as the term suggests, is aimed at maintaining operations, at least at a minimum level, even in the event of a disruptive incident. These *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Guidelines* outline the education continuity planning process. A complete template for the development of an education continuity plan is available through the Saskatchewan School Boards Association or on their web site at <http://saskschoolboards.ca./> Each school division must determine what planning and responsibility model works best. It should complement existing emergency response planning guidelines.

2.0 Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Guidelines

The general model for business continuity planning suggests a central Business Continuity Planning (BCP) Team with broad division-level responsibilities designated by the school division's Director of Education. As with all designated responsibilities, the BCP Team and its members act with the authority of the school division when carrying out assigned responsibilities.

2.0.1 Delegate Authority to the Business Continuity Planning Team

The BCP Team is usually assigned responsibility for:

- preparation of pandemic (and other emergency response) plans for the division and its schools,
- preparedness activities and
- response and recovery activities during and after a pandemic.

The school division should clearly delineate the authority delegated to the BCP Team, as well as mechanisms, timelines and formats for reporting to trustees, division administrators and others. (ex: bargaining units, parents, student bodies and communities-at-large) It will also be important to consider the liaison role of the BCP Team with community or regional planning groups such as regional health authorities and local governments.

Planning Tip: Since Business Continuity Planning Team members coordinate divisional operations during a pandemic, ensure there are backups in case the team leader or team members become ill.

2.1 Education System Planning

2.1.1 Membership

The BCP Team is usually composed of:

1. **A BCP Co-ordinator**, usually a division-level administrator charged with overseeing the activities of the team and overall pandemic preparedness, response and recovery within the school division, and possibly as the official spokesperson for the school division in the event of a pandemic.

2.1.2 Team members who represent a variety of division interests such as:

- division Director,
- division management and department representatives,
- school representatives, and representatives from the Ministry
- representatives from various employee groups.

2.2 Create a Planning Framework

A framework for planning should include:

- a planning schedule, including regular team meetings and deadlines for stages of plan completion;
- delegated responsibilities for various tasks and administrative functions;
- timelines for reporting progress to the school division./ board for the purpose of obtaining approvals and maintaining awareness and support;
- a plan format or template so that all plans and plan components have a similar look and feel – it will help make plans easier to use (ex. The Education Continuity Plan template Appendix E on page 34), See Education Continuity Planning Template
- an internal communication plan and process that keeps school division stakeholders informed about the planning process;
- input from professional associations, bargaining units, parent councils, student bodies, public health officials and government as appropriate;
- guidance on keeping plans user friendly, as concise as reasonably possible, and minimizing use of technical jargon that may not be well understood by those called upon to implement parts of the plan; and
- identifying links to relevant government and non-government sources of emergency preparedness and regular meetings to share ideas, information and suggestions. For example, schools should link with local government officials and their regional health authority (ex: public health nurse for the area and the emergency preparedness officer).

Planning Tip: A pandemic may have a more gradual onset and a prolonged impact. In addition, human illness and death may decrease system response capacity.

2.3 Identify Goals and Objectives

Suggested goals and objectives for school pandemic preparedness plans are:

2.3.1 Goals

1. To minimize the impact of the pandemic on students and staff.
2. To maintain services to students and families as long as it is safe to do so, or until directed otherwise.
3. To respond to outside needs, if required, as determined by a central government authority or local government.

2.3.2 Objectives

1. To ensure a safe environment for students and staff (before, during and following a pandemic)
2. To remain operational and maintain instruction and services
3. To ensure essential services continue during a pandemic (ex: supervision, curricular requirements, building security)
4. To communicate accurately and in a timely manner with management, staff, and students and families regarding operations before, during and after a pandemic period.
5. To track and monitor the activities and additional costs of responding to the pandemic.

2.4 Develop the Plan

To reiterate, the planning process outlined below is adapted from an approach (business continuity planning) and language that are standardized in emergency planning. For the purpose of the education sector the term Education Continuity Planning has been inserted. It takes an “all hazards” approach rather than being limited to pandemic planning. An all hazards approach might save time in the long term if school divisions undertake business continuity planning with all sorts of large-scale emergencies in mind (ex: floods, building closures due to fires, blizzards). The same planning steps apply, but anticipating potential impacts becomes more complicated. However, school divisions might wish to simplify their own approach by working through the following steps or a similar process in a more informal manner, addressing only pandemic planning at this time. Time and personnel resources are two important considerations in that decision since a complete business continuity planning process requires significant effort.

2.4.1 Education Continuity Planning (ECP) Process

1. Risk Analysis – use the risk analysis worksheet to develop an overview of the factors that might have to be dealt with in an emergency.
2. Business Impact Analysis – identify all critical business functions in the division or school including any added functions.(ex: emergency contact with parents) that might be required during an emergency. This takes some thought, since schools are organized around roles rather than functions.(ex: teachers’ roles include supervision and instruction). For each function complete a business impact analysis using the BCP instructions and worksheet. For each business function, two critical components are set:
 - a minimum operating standard, and
 - a recovery time objective.
3. Priorities for Restoration – create a table to rank all division or school functions by criticality and recovery time.
4. Function Restoration Planning – develop recovery plans for each function using the Function Restoration Strategy and Plan forms and instructions. The strategy describes the general approach to your recovery plans. The plan provides all the detail you need to respond in the event of a disruption and maintain your minimum operating standard and recovery time objectives.
5. Summarize and co-ordinate all the restoration plans into an overall divisional Educational Continuity Plan.
6. Identify people, time, training, resources and, where applicable, additional supplies and incremental costs to develop and maintain an emergency preparedness program.
7. Include a communications plan (internal and external).
8. Obtain senior management approval and initiate action for the pre-incident phase. (The detailed instructions and forms for Educational Continuity Planning are available at <http://saskschoolboards.ca../>)

2.4.2 Impacts and Possible Accommodations During a Pandemic

The following section describes anticipated effects on schools and identifies possible ways to manage the issues. While this section is particular to a pandemic, some of the impacts are common in other types of emergencies. The general ideas developed in the education continuity planning process above will be useful context for this section. In the event of a pandemic, there will be no perfect or universal solution to many of the anticipated effects. As with all societal disruptions, some rules, policies and established practices will be superseded by emergency powers or commonsense solutions that require interpersonal goodwill. However, anticipatory planning could mitigate many problems, and that is the purpose of this section.

Many of the suggested accommodations will take time to implement. There are two time periods to consider – the pre-pandemic period and the warning period between when a pandemic is recognized by the World Health Organization, and when it arrives in Saskatchewan. You cannot predict the length of the pre-pandemic period or the warning period; however, the warning period is *estimated* to be up to three months. The BCP Team and school division leaders should consider the costs and benefits of implementing specific accommodation plans during either time period. For instance, routine, periodic building maintenance activities might be re-scheduled during the warning period so that they are less likely to be needed during the pandemic itself. As another example, cross-training building maintenance staff to cover in other buildings might be targeted during the pre-pandemic period. This strategy might also prove useful for non-pandemic purposes.

2.4.2.1 Employee Absenteeism

Health experts estimate that between 15 and 35 per cent of the population could become ill enough to miss at least one half-day of work. If the pandemic causes illness in 35 per cent of the population, employers should expect up to 25 per cent of their staff to be away from work during the peak two weeks of a pandemic wave of activity. Public health officials are using 25-per-cent absenteeism rates for planning purposes. Absenteeism among staff may be due either to personal or family illness.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

Document Human Resource Skill Sets

Document all employees' teaching, administrative or other skills and knowledge to determine how they can be used to backfill employees providing key services. Establish a system for tracking the availability of all employees for the purposes of managing and re-assigning personnel as needed. Discuss possible response measures with the staff that currently fill key roles. Remember that once employees recover from influenza they will be immune to that strain. They may assume responsibilities that might put other employees at higher risk of becoming infected with influenza, such as dealing with persons who become ill while at school.

Leadership Activities

Designate backups for key decision makers and arrange for delegation of decision-making and financial authority, if they are unavailable.

Teaching Activities

Teachers are critical to effective student instruction and supervision. There may be a number of options for managing high levels of teacher absenteeism. The division planning process should include discussions with the teachers' association (Saskatchewan Teachers Federation) to brainstorm and consider creative strategies for addressing periods of high absenteeism. Some ideas might include:

Replacement Personnel

- Draw from the substitute pool
- Use administrative personnel, retired teachers, parents, volunteers or education students to assist teachers. Have some people licensed on temporary permits in advance of the pandemic. Where it is reasonably anticipated that the existing substitute pool will be depleted and no other qualified, certified teachers are available, school divisions may consider applying in advance to the Professional Certification and Student Records Unit for substitute teaching permits for persons who might potentially be called upon temporarily to replace ill staff. It is particularly advisable to have criminal record checks done well in advance for all potential temporary staff as the system may become backlogged during a pandemic.

Alternative Service Delivery

- Combine similar grades (since student absenteeism will likely reduce class sizes)
- Provide alternate activities that can be accommodated by fewer teaching staff
- Be prepared to temporarily combine schools
- Instruction should continue for students who are home and well enough to do school work including homework and/or virtual instruction on the Internet with phone contact
- School boards could consider Saturday classes or vacation school when conditions improve to make up for lost instruction time.

Scale Back Services

- Postpone or cancel classes or events when necessary
- Close the school until services can resume at an acceptable level (as a last resort)

Administrative Activities

- Consider any administrative activities that might be added during a pandemic or might increase in terms of workload (ex: contacting the parents of absent children, compiling and disseminating absentee information)
- Cross-train staff on any specialized or technical activities
- Prepare written instructions so that partially trained employees or volunteers can complete essential tasks (identified in the business continuity planning process)
- Document location of key information and means of access (ex: passwords, keys)
- Prepare to report excessive absenteeism to health officials for pandemic surveillance purposes

Building Maintenance Activities

- Document and review building maintenance activities and prioritize maintenance functions by the length of recovery time (a day, a week, two weeks, a month)
- Identify essential services to be continued even in event of a closure (heat, security)
- Consider any changes to maintenance during a pandemic (ex: increased cleaning)
- Cross-train maintenance staff with regard to any specialized or technical activities, including cross-training staff who normally perform other functions and work in other buildings (in rural or isolated areas, consider cross-training with municipal or regional health authority staff)
- Prepare written instructions so that untrained employees or volunteers can complete some essential tasks
- Document the locations of critical equipment, building systems, service panels and means of accessing them

2.4.2.2 Student Absenteeism

Depending on the age groups most affected by the specific pandemic influenza virus and how it spreads among the population, absenteeism rates may be the same, lower or higher among students than teachers. In addition, any people with decreased immune system functioning related to chronic health conditions may be at higher risk of infection. The parents of such students may choose to keep them at home. During periods of high absenteeism such as a pandemic, schools are expected to continue to offer instruction. Compulsory curricula should be taught to the extent possible, allowing students to progress academically.

Planning for Students' Special Needs:

Educational programming, continuity planning should consider all the staff and students, including those with disabilities and special health needs. Where students require additional supports, such as an instructional assistant, to participate in a meaningful and safe way in the educational program, the services may be interrupted if key staff members are absent. Every effort should be made to meet with parents of students with exceptional needs and to develop plans for the event of widespread school closures or staff shortages. Consideration should be made for the student's educational programming, the availability of alternate staff support and in some cases transportation. Whenever possible, this planning should take place yearly, allowing parents to be involved and aware of potential issues that may interrupt their child's educational programming. In a pandemic situation any potential health risk to the student should also be discussed with the family in developing a plan.

School divisions should identify a plan that will cause the least disruption to the student's programming while maintaining safety for all concerned.

Routine Reporting of Absenteeism to Public Health:

School divisions should contact the local public health office for advice about any potential health issue, such as unusually high absenteeism rates or a suspected outbreak of specific illness (ex: gastrointestinal or influenza-like illness).

MANAGING THE ISSUE

Alternate strategies for instruction may be needed so students are able to receive instruction and progress to the next level of education at the appropriate time. See the suggested teaching activities under Section 2.4.2.1 above. Students will also need to receive timely communication regarding the school's plans and expectations for continued instruction. See Section 2.4.4, *Communications Plan*, on page 24.

2.4.2.3 Interruption of Services, Supplies and Reduction in Outside Supports

Suppliers are likely to experience operational, production and shipping difficulties and the demand for certain types of supplies may increase dramatically. Some supplies may not be available at all. Costs may also rise. Government departments will also be dealing with a human health emergency. See *Provincial Government Planning*.

Section.1.3.1. Some parents or volunteers may be unavailable.

Planning Assumption:

You can assume that utilities including electricity, natural gas and telephone services will not be disrupted.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

Talk to suppliers to determine if they have plans to deal with emergency conditions and will be able to continue despite transportation and staffing disruptions. If it appears there may be supply difficulties, consider locating suitable service providers as a backup in case your regular suppliers are not available. Check contracts for supplies and services. (cleaning, snow removal) to see if they cover contingencies such as emergencies. Build an inventory of critical supplies, gradually ordering extra. Ensure supplies particularly needed during emergencies are on hand in quantities required.(ex: for a pandemic – hand soap, cleaning supplies, tissues, hand wipes) Have maintenance inspections and repair work done in advance.(ex: during the warning period before a pandemic arrives) Determine how long systems that require periodic maintenance can operate without inspection. Determine beforehand whom to contact in government for regulatory and public health issues.

2.4.2.4 Potential Closure

It is possible that schools may close due to:

- Public health officials ordering the temporary closure of all public facilities where people congregate, including schools, in the early stages of a pandemic in an attempt to slow the spread and impact of the disease. Closures could be province-wide or regional.
- Circumstances that cause a school to close temporarily as an incidental closure. This could be due to excessive employee absenteeism or a critical building system failure that

results in the inability to maintain a safe environment for students. The division will make this type of decision, following the same procedure used for winter storms and other hazardous conditions.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

Your plan should include provisions for handling temporary closures to help minimize impacts to students, their families, employees and others. See Section 2.4.4, Communications Plan, on page 24).

Students and Families

Redeploy students to other schools in the division, providing that transportation and space is available. This could include relocating teachers to other schools. If all schools are closing, the division and schools should provide parents with as much lead- time as possible, the reasons for the closure and a realistic estimate of the duration of the closure.

Employees

Your plan should outline a policy regarding employee income and benefits in the event of a school closure. This should be communicated to employees prior to any emergency as part of the preparation phase. If income and benefits would not be provided for some employee groups, then communicate clearly with affected employees at the time of a pandemic and provide them with the information required to seek Employment Insurance or other financial assistance during the closure. You may consider deferring staff leaves for non-health reasons, for example professional development, vacation or other reasons, if staff members are needed to cover for absent employees. You will need to meet with your union representatives and identify any contract issues that result from a school closure.

Building Maintenance

School buildings will still require routine inspection and maintenance to ensure that building systems remain operational, and damages or delays in re-opening the school are avoided. Make necessary arrangements to have the school checked as required.

Other School Facility Users

Many schools permit other users such as childcare centres, community, sports or school groups to utilize school facilities. Of these, the loss of a childcare centre can have particularly significant effects on working families and possibly essential services in the community. Talk to public health officials to clarify the meaning of a potential health closure order. Would it mean closing the facility to all uses or would some be permitted? Based on this information, talk to other groups that use the school and advise them of your findings so that they may plan for this possibility. Advise tenants of the school closure plan and clarify their responsibility for alternative relocation.

Schools Designated as Emergency Housing

In some situations schools are an emergency housing alternative for other organizations (ex: for a senior citizen residence) If that is the case the school should inform the other

organization about the potential for school closure in a pandemic and clarify how communication will in the in that event.

Animals in the School

If there are animals in the school (ex: classroom pets, lab animals) schools could make the same kinds of arrangements that occur during holiday breaks.

Related Considerations:

Under *The Education Act 1998*, the Minister has the authority to close a school in an emergency such as a pandemic. However, any such decision will take into account information and recommendations from the school division. The general expectation is that schools will continue operating for as long as it is safe to do so. For a division-initiated request for closure to be approved, there must be indication that safety was at risk even after accommodations had been made. Schools facing this situation are advised to contact their school division or Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Health and the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) also have authority to take emergency community-wide actions, including closures of public facilities as outlined in Section 1.3.1. *Provincial Government Planning*. A public health order or directive would be issued and communicated to schools by public health, in collaboration with education officials.

2.4.2.5 Potential Additional Duties

It is possible that schools will be directed to provide facilities or personnel, or both, for emergency responses in the community. The authority for this could come from the regional health authority, or local, provincial or federal governments. No additional duties are assigned at this time. However, school divisions should be receptive to assisting response plans if needed. This could include providing gymnasium use (such as for health clinics), buses and/or staff. It could also include provision of childcare services beyond regular school hours or distribution of materials to students and families in the community. It is not anticipated that schools/school divisions will be responsible for leading or managing non-educational activities that use school resources. However, in an emergency situation, decisions will be made based on the needs at the time and schools may be called upon for leadership in certain circumstances.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

The school division Education Continuity Planning Co-ordinator should meet with local government and regional health authority planning groups to share what resources the school division has and learn how the community plans are developing. No additional duties are assigned at this time so specific plans are not needed until more information is known.

2.4.2.6 Financial Losses

There may be a variety of financial implications for schools. These could include:

- Incremental costs associated with preparing for, responding to and recovering from the emergency. This could include the cost of substitute staff, additional supplies, alternate instruction venues, counseling and communication associated with emergency responsibilities for the school population. If extended hours for child-care centres located in the school are required, there may be additional overtime costs for custodians.
- extra costs associated with duties assigned for the broader community (if any).
- lost school instruction time and revenue for independent schools with tuition fees.
- loss of reputation, enrollment and funding for those schools that compete for student enrollment.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

School divisions should include emergency preparedness in their financial management processes. This may include:

- budgeting processes and
- tracking preparation, response and recovery activities and costs for:
 - legal issues that may arise, and
 - reimbursement of eligible costs under any announced disaster recovery programs.

Some school insurance policies may include business continuity insurance, which normally covers temporary costs (ex: temporary space) that arise from a disaster. However, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association Insurance Program will not cover the unique costs associated with an influenza pandemic. Generally, lost revenue is less likely an issue in public schools. At present, federal and provincial disaster assistance does not cover situations such as pandemic. However, this might change as planning or a possible pandemic proceeds. School divisions and independent schools are advised to plan to track incremental costs. (the extra costs due to pandemic activities, less any savings from not having to provide some services). This will be useful for planning purposes in the future, as well as in the event there is any level of compensation made available from the various levels of government. Should schools be used for other purposes, those extra costs should be tracked as well, if only for subsequent budgetary reporting.

Funding Considerations

Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education will continue to fund school divisions and independent schools during an emergency. However, funding will be contingent on a number of factors, including reasonable efforts to maintain contact with students, continued instruction, and opportunities for student learning and progress.

2.4.2.7 Potential Spread of Infection at School

During a pandemic, schools will need to implement measures to minimize or slow the spread of influenza within their facilities. However, nothing can fully stop transmission.

Public health officials will recommend that those who are ill should stay at home until they are well. This advice will be especially important during a pandemic. “Presenteeism,” or coming to work while sick, should be discouraged by schools and school divisions alike, by developing, implementing and communicating clear policies on staying home while ill, compensation issues, and ensuring a system is in place to cover the work of those who are ill.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

Schools and school divisions will need to promote the preventive measures outlined in this document. Measures to reduce interpersonal exposure within buildings need to be balanced with the need to maintain normal routines, school operations and societal functioning. Suggested measures include establishing a clear and well-communicated policy for students and staff on staying at home, even with minor symptoms (ex: combat the phenomenon labeled “presenteeism”). At the time of a pandemic, public health officials will give specific advice regarding measures to minimize or slow the transmission of influenza.

Examples of measures that may be recommended are:

- reducing visitors to the school,
- reducing the number and duration of face-to-face meetings or number of persons in attendance,
- considering postponing all events that are open to the public and/or parents, including travel for interschool activities, and
- increasing distance education and work-at-home options.

Travel advisory information will be communicated by public health officials. Information on recommended public health measures can be obtained from local public health officials at the time of a pandemic.

Planning Tip: Compliance with staying home when ill will depend on the level of assurance employers can provide to employees that failure to attend work due to illness will not result in financial hardship or significant loss of benefits. Promoting personal hygiene practices and maintaining building hygiene are also important. Strategies include:

- educating and reminding students and others of the importance of preventive measures (as outlined earlier in Section 1.2.1. – Preventative Steps),
- following hygiene measures (as outlined in Appendix D – Building Hygiene), in particular:
 - ensuring supplies are available for students to wash their hands and teaching them how to wash their hands properly,
 - ensuring that washrooms are inspected regularly and faucets are easy to use by younger children,
 - ensuring routine cleaning is maintained, including high-traffic areas and items being touched frequently (ex: washroom faucets, computer keyboards and eating areas), and
 - ensuring that schools have sufficient cleaning supplies on hand to meet increased cleaning requirements.

Related Considerations

Under *The Education Act, 1995*, the school principal is responsible for safety of the school premises and for reporting needs to the school division administration. Since influenza spreads very easily, it will not be possible to keep a school infection-free. However, school officials should take all reasonable steps to slow and reduce the spread among staff and students.

During a pandemic, Saskatchewan Ministry of Health will provide advice regarding return to work/school for those who are ill.

2.4.2.8 Illness Among Staff and Students While at School

Influenza virus spreads easily, particularly among younger children.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

Ensure procedures and facilities are in place to separate ill children from healthy children until their parents can be contacted to take them home. Keep ill children in a separate room and keep them a metre apart, even if they are not displaying characteristic influenza symptoms. This serves to minimize the likelihood of transmission between those with influenza and those ill due to other causes. Establish policy to send ill employees home with advice to stay home until well enough to return. Communicate Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health advice about return to school and work timelines to staff, students and parents.

2.4.3 Recovery Plans

A pandemic may come in two or more waves and last up to two years. It will result in a variety of impacts to the school division, including:

- significant loss of instructional time and backlog of work postponed due to the pandemic,
- disruption of communication with students, families and others;
- psychological stress and low morale (knowing that individuals coping abilities will be challenged by a variety of issues, such as deaths of colleagues, friends and loved ones, financial hardship associated with unemployment, incomplete schooling and other issues);
- additional costs to the school;
- permanent loss of employees and their corporate knowledge due to death or disability.

Pre-planning for recovery will help accelerate a return to normal and reduce stress and long term effects within the schools. Plans should consider recovery both between pandemic waves and after the pandemic is completely over.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

Consider the following in your school's recovery plan:

- create strategies for catching up on missed instructional time or backlogged work;

- ensure continued communications with employees, parents and students regarding the return to normal operations;
- rebuild corporate knowledge of school and school division processes or systems;
- hold ceremonies to remember deceased employees or students;
- implement in-class programs for students to help them deal with stress and the impacts of the pandemic;
- identify resources for stress counseling for employees, students and their families;
- recruit and train replacement employees and temporarily or permanently reassigning employees to maintain operations; and.
- compile necessary information to participate in any financial recovery programs.(if announced).

2.4.4 Communications Plan

School divisions and schools will need to collect, manage and disseminate information, both internally and to a variety of external audiences. There are two objectives for communications:

- to keep management, staff and stakeholders aware of planning and the latest information on the pandemic,
- to control and co-ordinate internal and external communications to the school population and community.

Planning Tip: Open, honest communication will foster better working relationships, co-ordination and co-operation and will help create confidence and alleviate fear, disruption and inconvenience.

MANAGING THE ISSUE

An effective response to a pandemic should include frequent clear and effective communication with all .the individuals and organizations that your school /school division interacts with regularly. Communications should be concise, factual, understandable and culturally appropriate for your target audience. People benefit from receiving information directly from an official source before hearing it informally in the community or second-hand from unofficial school sources. The school division or independent school should designate an official spokesperson in the event of a pandemic. Create a communications plan that considers the following communications needs and responsibilities during various phases of the pandemic:

2.4.4.1 Pre-Pandemic Communications

Monitor Information about Pandemic Influenza (School Division)

Keep abreast of the latest pandemic information from official public health sources by consulting your regional health authority and reviewing material on various Government websites.

Share Information with Employees (School and School Division)

Provide information on the school's plans and preparedness for responding to a pandemic including:

- any necessary training and written information on the roles that employees will have in implementing the plan (ex: educating students on ways of preventing infection), and
- reliable sources where employees can find information on how to prepare themselves and their families for a pandemic and what to do if they become infected. Encourage staff to make healthy lifestyle choices and to get an annual flu shot, particularly if they fall within a high-risk group.

Share Information with Parents and Students (School)

Most people do not understand the basic concepts about pandemic influenza and what it may mean to their family or community. Provide guidance to parents and employees on how to obtain information on pandemic preparedness, including measures to protect themselves and their families during a pandemic, caring for ill persons at home, and recovery resources after the pandemic or between pandemic waves.

- Talk to parents about their expectations and needs during a pandemic
- Communicate the measures you are taking to remain operational and to ensure a safe and healthy environment for employees and students...
- Tell how closures or other changes will be communicated to students and parents

Share Information with other School Divisions or Schools (All)

Schools and school divisions should share their plans and preparedness activities with others in order to benefit all schools in the province.

2.4.4.2 Communications During a Pandemic

Continue to Monitor and Disseminate Information about the Pandemic (School Division)

Assumptions about the characteristics of the pandemic may change as new information about the virus becomes available. Continue this activity from the pre-pandemic phase and use this information to make decisions and adjust plans as necessary and appropriate. Disseminate critical information to the school division and to your schools.

Continue to Share Information with Employees (School Division / School)

Continue to reinforce messaging from the pre-pandemic phase and keep employees apprised of changes to operations within the school and school division.

Continue to Share Information with Parents and Students (School)

Continue to share information with parents and students. Reinforce messages from the pre-pandemic phase following the advice of the local government and public health officials. Keep parents and students apprised of changes to school services. This messaging should provide concise, factual information about:

- the impact of the pandemic on the school/school division,
- what students/parents can expect from the school/school division
- what they can do to work with you, and
- when suspended services or reduced services will be restored (be realistic and honest about limitations or delays in service).

Share Information with the Community and Regional Health Authorities (School Division)

Communicate as necessary with the community and regional health authority regarding issues needs identification and support that schools may be able to provide.

2.4.4.3 Communications After a Pandemic

After a pandemic there will likely be considerable personal and family stress related to the many social, economic and psychological effects. Your school/school division can help students, their families and others in your community by identifying community resources to help people cope with loss and stress.

3.1 Maintain Your Plan

Update your contingency plan periodically to account for new information or practices related to influenza, to reflect the changes in your school division/school and its operations, and to keep contact and other information current. Assign responsibility for periodic review to maintain the plan's relevance, accuracy and functionality. Generally, a business continuity plan should be reviewed annually and when a new school or division administrators are assigned.

3.2 Training and Awareness

Training sessions raise awareness of the risk and start to prepare individuals and groups for their roles during a pandemic. Your school /school division could consider several options, including:

- sending representatives on general emergency preparedness and response training or pandemic specific training offered by government or private sector organizations
- conducting employee training and awareness on the risk of and internal organizational response to a pandemic
- providing necessary job training to staff members who are expected to serve as backups to other key personnel and
- conducting table-top exercises among key personnel, followed by detailed debriefing to identify plan improvements.

3.3 Conclusion

Diligent planning will pay big dividends in the event of an influenza pandemic or other emergency by helping to minimize disruption and maintain levels of instruction for students. Consider this as an opportunity to increase your school/school division capacity for business continuity during other crises.

As a final note, consider sharing your pandemic planning and preparedness experience with other schools and school divisions, as well as organizations in your community. There are all kinds of different approaches to solving problems and sharing this information helps strengthen everyone's level of preparedness for a pandemic and other hazards.

APPENDIX A - Contacts

The following is a list of contacts in the province of Saskatchewan to support your pandemic planning and respond to any need for further direction during a pandemic.

EMERGENCY RESPONNSE CO-ORDINATION

**Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region **

Kateri Singer
Manager
Pandemic Preparedness & South Regions Forum
766-2459
766-4345(Fax)
kateri.singer@rqhealth.ca

Saskatoon Health Region

Lorna Neufeldt
Northern Representative
Pandemic Preparedness

Government of Saskatchewan

Garnet Matchett
Program and Policy Consultant
System Safety and Health Emergency Management Unit
Ministry of Health
(306) 787-3179

Saskatchewan Emergency Management Organization

Kevin Roche
Director
100 – 1855 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3T2
(306) 787-9567

Karen Morrow
Program Coordinator
100 – 1855 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3T2
(306) 787-9566

APPENDIX B

What can I do to prevent myself from getting infected with influenza during a pandemic?

Public health officials expect that if a new type of influenza emerges and causes a pandemic, this virus will spread in a similar fashion to the influenza viruses that cause outbreaks each winter. Influenza is highly contagious so it spreads quickly in families and communities. There are, however, some steps you can take to reduce your risk of infection. Improve your overall health. In general, healthier people are better at fighting off disease. To stay healthy, you should eat healthy foods, get plenty of sleep, exercise and not smoke. Avoid heavy alcohol consumption and try to maintain a positive and balanced outlook. Wash your hands often. Washing hands is the most effective way of preventing the spread of disease. Get into the habit of washing your hands often with soap and warm water, scrubbing your wrists, palms, web spaces, thumbs, fingers and nails for 10 to 15 seconds. Rinse and dry with a clean towel. This should be done especially before meals, after using the toilet and after you cough, sneeze or blow your nose. Teach your children to do the same. Avoid visiting people who have the flu if practical to do so. This will help to prevent you from becoming infected. This advice must be balanced with the need to provide support and care to sick people. Caregivers looking after sick people should wear a mask when coming face-to-face with a coughing individual to minimize influenza transmission. Avoid large crowds. Remember that large crowds are ideal for the spread of influenza, so consider staying at home. Wearing masks to prevent transmission of influenza is not helpful when it is circulating in the community. Don't share eating utensils or drinks. If a family member is sick, keep their personal items (ex: towels and toothbrushes) separate from those of the rest of the family. Get a vaccine when available. Vaccination is the principal measure for preventing influenza and reducing the impact of epidemics. Various types of influenza vaccines have been available and used for more than 60 years.

Take antivirals if recommended by your doctor. Antivirals are drugs used for the prevention and early treatment of influenza. If taken shortly after getting sick (within 48 hours), they can reduce influenza symptoms, shorten the length of the illness and potentially reduce any serious complications. Antivirals work by reducing the ability of the virus to reproduce; however, they do not provide immunity from the virus. Antiviral drugs, given at the onset of the disease, may assist but are not likely to be available in sufficient quantities to treat the majority of the population. Planning for antiviral use during a pandemic is ongoing at the national level, however, it is most likely that antiviral drugs will be used at the beginning of a pandemic to treat people who become ill pending the development of a vaccine.

What if I think I have the flu?

Most people with influenza recover without any serious problems. The disease can last four to seven days and leave a cough and tiredness for several weeks. In general, there is no specific treatment for influenza. Antivirals may occasionally be prescribed by your doctor. Antibiotics are not effective against the influenza virus, although, they will be effective against complications caused by bacteria such as pneumonia. Avoid going to work or social gatherings if you are ill. Wear a mask if you need to visit your doctor. At the time of a pandemic, the Ministry of Health will provide information on steps you can take to help care for yourself if you have influenza.

What if my child is sick?

Like with adults, most children get better from influenza without any specific treatment. Sick children should be kept home from school and daycare. At the time of a pandemic, Saskatchewan Ministry of Health will provide information on steps you can take to help care for your children if they have influenza.

DURING A PANDEMIC, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO:

- Follow directions given by public health. These may change as more information becomes available about the characteristics of the particular virus causing the outbreak
- Follow infection control procedures if caring for a person with influenza. Providing care to an individual with an influenza-like illness will be common during a pandemic. The likelihood of transmitting the disease is reduced by following basic precautions. Watch the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health website for updates at <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/pandemic-planning>

How can I care for myself when I have the flu?

- Stay home and rest
 - Drink plenty of fluids
 - Take medication for your symptoms
- NOTE: Do not give children or teenagers any products containing aspirin or ASA (acetylsalicylic acid) as it can cause a very serious illness called Reye's syndrome, which affects the nervous system and liver.
- For a sore throat, gargle a glass of warm water mixed with a half-teaspoon of salt. Throat lozenges are also effective for relieving a sore throat.
 - For a stuffy nose adults can take a decongestant, but consult with a health care professional such as a pharmacist, nurse or doctor. Children can be given saline nose drops.
 - Wash your hands frequently
 - Ask for help – you may need to ask for help at home until you are feeling better
 - Ill people or those caring for them may be advised to wear a surgical mask to reduce the spread of disease
 - Wearing of masks by well people in the community is not recommended as a general measure. This is because it is unlikely to be sustainable for the entire duration of a pandemic. In addition, masks can provide false security and can lead to contamination unless properly handled.

- If you or your child experience any of the following systems you should seek medical attention immediately:
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,
- chest pain or pressure,
- coughing up dark-coloured or bloody sputum,
- wheezing,
- extreme ear pain,
- fever for three or more days that is not going down or if you do not start feeling better in a few days,
- you have started to feel better and suddenly feel much worse,
- confusion, extreme drowsiness or difficulty waking up

APPENDIX C - Hand Hygiene

Hand washing/hand hygiene reduces the number of micro-organisms on the hands and is the most important practice to prevent the spread of infection.

When: Before:

- Direct hands-on care of others
- Preparing, handling, serving or eating food
- Feeding others

After:

- Contact with items known or considered to be contaminated
- Personal use of toilet, wiping nose or coughing.

Products: Plain soap and water:

- Recommended for routine hand washing

Alcohol-based hand rub:

- Products containing a minimum of 60 per cent alcohol are an alternative when plain soap and water are not available, except if hands are visibly soiled
- If hands are visibly soiled, heavy soiling should be removed before using alcohol-based hand rubs for maximum effectiveness.

How to wash your hands:

Using plain soap and water:

- Wet hands under warm running water. Use either liquid or bar soap.
- Apply soap and distribute over hands.
- Rub hands together vigorously for 10 to 15 seconds to create a good lather
- Using friction, cover all hand surfaces including wrists, fingernails, web spaces, thumbs and palms.
- Rinse under warm running water
- Dry hands gently and thoroughly with a disposable towel
- Turn off faucet using a clean disposable towel

Using an alcohol-based hand rub:

- Apply two to three milliliters of the product to the palm of one hand
- Rub hands together covering all surfaces including, wrists, fingernails, web spaces, thumbs and palms
- The product generally dries within 15 to 20 seconds
- Ensure hands are completely dry before performing another task

APPENDIX D - Building Hygiene

The following steps are recommended to maximize hygiene in schools during a pandemic. They focus on reducing the spread of viral infection. Most of these activities are standard in schools and should be undertaken routinely. These activities will be equally important during a pandemic. Building hygiene should be addressed in school contingency plans, including supply and human resource management.

General

- Surfaces must not show any visible soil before they are sanitized
- Cleaning equipment should be maintained in a clean, dry state after use. Cloths, mop-heads and other supplies should have single purpose use (floors or walls or furnishings only) and be changed when soiled after use
- Waste baskets for disposal of soiled tissues are needed throughout the school, close to the point of use

Products for Cleaning and Sanitizing

- Cleaning with detergent and water is generally acceptable
- Commercial household products are acceptable to sanitize environmental surfaces when used according to manufacturer's instructions
- To prepare a noncommercial sanitizing solution, use unscented chlorine bleach for wiping surfaces, etc., mix one tablespoon (15 millilitres) in four litres of water
- for immersing dishes, toys, dishcloths, etc., mix one tablespoon (15 millilitres) in four litres of water.
- Mix fresh solutions daily
- Either liquid or bar soap can be used in washrooms. Liquid soap containers should not be "topped up", instead, liquid soap should be supplied in disposable bags in wall containers by sinks or in small non-refillable containers to avoid product contamination. Bar soap should be stored in racks that allow drainage of excess water (disease producing organisms can survive in stagnant water)
- Disposable paper towels should be used in public washrooms. If possible, install dispensers that require no hand contact to remove a towel. Individual cloth towels should not be shared
- Provide a waste basket for towels used to open washroom doors upon exiting, or leave washroom doors open.

Cleaning Methods

- Cleaning should proceed from least to most soiled. Cleaning solutions should be changed when they appear dirty and/or after a spill cleanup
- Cleaning primarily involves horizontal surfaces (ex: desks, countertops, tabletops, floors) and surfaces that are frequently handled (ex: door knobs, telephones, bathroom fixtures)

Cleaning Schedules

Cleaning schedules should be established according to the type of surface to be cleaned and the type of soiling that occurs. For example:

- spills – clean immediately
- surfaces used for food preparation or diapering – clean after each use

- kitchen, bathrooms, playroom – clean daily and as necessary
- offices, countertops, computer keyboards, phones, appliances – clean weekly and as necessary
- furniture, walls and carpets – follow a rotating schedule (monthly/yearly) and as necessary
- sports equipment such as balls for games – clean weekly
- reusable gloves – clean after each use

Adequate Supplies

Schools should plan in advance for maintaining adequate resources for infection prevention and control in schools (soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs) as there may be an interruption of supply availability.

APPENDIX E - Compiling a Plan – Pandemic Template

For a full copy of the Education Continuity Planning Template and Framework see the Saskatchewan School Boards Association website. This template was developed jointly with the Saskatoon Public School Division.

Annex A - Continuity Team Contact List

Team	Team Member	Work #	Cel-phone #	Work email	Home #	Home email
Crisis management Leader Alternate Leader Member Member	<i>name</i>	<i>777-7777</i>	<i>222-2222</i>		<i>333-3333</i>	
Continuity Team Leader Alternate Leader						
Facilities Team Leader Alternate Leader						
HR Team Leader Alternate Leader						
insert details for each team						

Critical Activity Impact Analysis - Interview Outline

Department: _____

Date Completed:

Superintendent / Manager / Coordinator: _____

1. What are your essential critical activities?
(What must be done, What must keep functioning)

Enter details and brief description in column A of attached form.

2. What are the critical activity enabling processes?
(What activities or process are required to keep the activity functioning?)

Enter details here and brief description in column B of attached form. Expand this row as required.

3. Who is dependent on your critical functions and processes?

(List the activities or processes that would be affected by the loss of each of the listed activities)

Please provide details in column C of attached form. (note: detail internal and/or external)

4. What are the anticipated impacts of a disruption of each of the described essential or critical functions?

Please provide details for each critical activity, in column D-G of attached form using the following values

Loss of Capability (LOC)	High	75 - 100%
	Medium	50 - 75%
	Low	25 - 50%
Loss of Reputation (LOR)	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Legal/Regulatory Breach (LRB)	Yes	value of fines / litigation
	No	
Loss of Money (LOM)	High	Over > 100K per day
	Medium	Up to 100K per day
	Low	Up to 10K per day

5. Based on the anticipated impact what are your recovery target timeframe for each critical activity?

What is the tolerance for non performance of a critical activity? How long can the activity / process go unattended before intolerable impacts are realized.

Please enter the tolerable recovery timeframe in column "I"

0 to 2 hours	- Immediate
2 to 8 hours	- Today
8 to 24 hours	- Before Tomorrow
24 to 48 hours	- Tomorrow
3 to 5 days	- This week
> 5 days	- This month

**Education Continuity
Project Checklist and Schedule**

Task Complete	Project Primary and Development task	Task Assigned	
	<p>Develop Education Continuity Management (ECM) Policy:</p> <p>Executive appoint person or team to manage the ECM Program. Identify and document the components of the ECM Policy. Identify relevant standards, regulations and legislation that must be included in the Policy. Develop a draft of a Policy and circulate for consultation. Submit and obtain Executive Management approval Publish and distribute the Education Continuity Management Policy, have a version control system.</p>		
	<p>Develop ECM Program:</p> <p>Establish a Project Team - constituents should include business operations, administration, curriculum, facilities, human resources and technology Define the scope of the continuity management program. Determine the key approaches to each stage of the ECM life cycle as described in the Framework. Develop Definitions and terms Determine the Divisions current state of readiness.</p>		
	<p>Conduct an Impact Analysis (BIA):</p> <p>Determine scope and terms of reference for the Impact Analysis and Risk Assessment Conduct EC Project Team BIA workshop Develop BIA Questionnaire and Workshop Determine questionnaire recipients and workshop participants Distribute BIA questionnaires BIA Teams complete questionnaires / attend workshops Initial BIA data analysis Schedule follow-up interviews and workshops Conduct follow-up interviews and workshops Consolidate, analyze and summarize BIA results and data Determine what the Mission Critical Activities are Determine the financial impacts of a disruption Determine the operational and education impacts of disruption Develop Maximum Tolerable Outage (MTO) criteria for each mission critical activity Determine Recovery Time Objectives Develop business unit recovery priorities and priority order of recovery. Identify resource requirements over time to enable each critical activity owner within the organization to achieve continuity objectives within the timeframes established as part of BIA activity. Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff numbers and key skills - Vital Records and data currency (Recovery Point Objective) - Voice and data applications and systems - Infrastructure (cabling and network links) - Facilities (alternative location needs) - Suppliers (intra-organization and/or outsourced providers) and their interdependencies - Constraints (such as contractual issues) 		

Prepare BIA report and presentation
Present to the Executive to attain approval to move onto continuity strategy design.

Conduct a Risk Analysis (RA):

Verify RA scope & objectives
Establish criteria for risk High / Medium / Low likelihood and consequence
List threats to the mission critical activities
Estimate the impact of the risk for each mission critical activity
Estimate the likelihood (probability or frequency) of each risk
Calculate a risk by combining the scores for impact and likelihood of each risk according to an agreed formula.
Identify risk controls that are in place
Identify significant gaps and recommend possible additional controls
Consider appropriate measures to: Accept, Transfer, Reduce or Avoid
Prepare RA report and presentation
Present RA to Executive Management
Obtain Executive Management approval for the proposed risk management control(s).
Make changes directed by Executive Management
Proceed to development of Strategic, Operational and Tactical ECM strategy.

Develop and Analyze Continuity Options

Confirm Mission Critical Activities prioritization, including their dependencies
Confirm the Maximum Tolerable Outage (MTO) using the results from the Business Impact Analysis.
Confirm Recovery Time Objective (RTO) for the process, which should be shorter than the MTO.
Identify appropriate procedures for each mission critical activity and generate options.
Evaluate the cost - benefit for the Mission Critical Activity Strategy options to optimize efficiency, to attain recovery time objectives and to ensure cost effectiveness.
Provide executive management with a strategy evaluation, which they can assess based on the organization's risk appetite.
Develop recommended Continuity strategies
Prepare strategy report and presentation
Present Continuity Strategy Report to Executive Management
Make changes directed by Executive management

Develop Education Continuity Plan (ECP)

Appoint an owner for the EC Plan (or each plan for multiple sites).
Define the objectives and scope for the plan.
Develop planning process and timetable.
Decide on the structure, format, components and control of the plan(s).
Determine and document which procedures (Strategic, Operational or Tactical) the plan will document and which will be documented in other plans.
Determine and document the circumstances that are beyond the scope of the EC Plan.

Develop Operational Continuity Strategy:

Consolidate the recovery strategy or strategies identified in the previously developed Mission Critical Activity strategic framework.

Document the resource requirements over time for each mission critical function to achieve continuity or resumption of activity within the timeframes established as part of BIA activity. Examples are:

- Staff numbers and key skills
- Vital Records and data currency (Recovery Point Objective)
- Voice and data applications and systems
- Infrastructure (cabling and network links)
- Facilities (alternative location needs)
- Suppliers (intra-organization and/or outsourced providers) and their interdependencies
- Constraints (such as contractual issues)

Develop and document recovery resources and services strategy to provide for the cost effective restoration of Education mission critical activities;

- within their desired Recovery Time (RTO) and Maximum Tolerable Outage (MTO) targets.
- with data recovered to within their Recovery Point Objectives (RPO).

Create Operational Strategy implementation action plans. The Risk Assessment may suggest priority areas for implementation.

Write Department / Unit Resumption Plan(s):

Appoint a person to be responsible for development of the plans overall and a representative within each business unit to develop their plan.

Define the objective and scope of the plans.

Develop a planning process and timetabled program. Where possible, begin with the plans for the most urgent functions.

Develop an outline or template plan to encourage standardization of documentation but allow individual variations where this is appropriate

The Education Resumption Plans provide the Operational Response to a disruption for each unit of the organization. Examples of Unit plans are:

- department / school plan to resume its critical functions within a predefined timescale
- an incident response team, who deal with the specific incident and its physical impact (if any)
- Human Resources response to the staffing and wellness issues of an event
- IT branch's response to the loss and subsequent resumption of IT services to the business

Circulate the draft of the plan(s) for consultation, review and challenge within and, where necessary outside, the division

Validate the plan with a department table-top exercise

Consolidate the plans and review for consistency.

Document connections and dependencies with the Division EC Plan and between department plans.

Coordinate Emergency Response Plan

Review Emergency Response Plan/s and synchronize with the EC plans

Document the responsibilities of the Emergency Management Team and their relationship with other plans

Ensure support by and coordination with Emergency First Responders (Fire/Police)

Coordinate Crisis Management Plan:

Document the responsibilities of the Crisis Management Team and their relationship with other plans

Develop continuity procedures for the Crisis Management Plan that can support the role of the Crisis Team during an event

Develop continuity procedures for the Crisis Communications Plan

Implement and Maintain the Education Continuity Plan (ECP)

Implementation – assess awareness, deliver program, measure results

Develop Division awareness plan

Develop ECP training plan

Provide Training to Continuity Teams on:

- ECP Methodology
- EC Program objectives
- plan assumptions
- plan limitations and scope
- Department plan development

Develop general employee and stakeholder awareness program

Maintenance - Exercising, Audit and Review

Establish exercise plan objectives

Determine best exercise and test approaches / methodologies

Define Exercise and test logistic requirements

Schedule exercise participants

Develop exercise goals and objectives

Develop exercise scenarios and scripts

Critique exercises and tests

Review exercise and test results

Write exercise report

Present recommendations

Change Management

Identify triggers and sources of change

Define maintenance procedures

Document plan maintenance guidelines and procedures

Publish plan maintenance guidelines and procedures

Review and modify plan/s based on event and exercise lessons learned

Publish continuity plan changes

General Information & Questions

Does your college/work unit have any emergency plans in place now? If yes, does it address a staff shortage situation?

Could your college/work unit prepare its own pandemic business continuity plan if proper guidance was provided?

Ensure the plan identifies the person(s) who would have responsibility for activating such a plan for your college/unit? Name a back up as well.

Would you be able to assign a priority rating to the various programs/services provided by your unit? (i.e. programs that must continue vs. programs that could be cut back or cancelled for periods of time)

Do you have enough staff to continue high priority services if there is an absenteeism rate of 35% over an 8 week period? If yes, indicate if there are any employees who could be temporarily assigned to another unit to provide assistance if needed. If no, prepare a plan to meet your human resource needs.

If possible, identify specific trigger points where staff shortages would indicate the need for a contingency plan to be activated.

Develop a communication strategy for advising employees/stakeholders about matters affecting/relating to the services you provide. (i.e. contact lists)

List those services that could experience a ‘surge’ in demand. (Note that these services must be addressed in your contingency plan.)

Planning Resource Needs

Obtain the input you need from others (both internally and externally) to prepare and review a business continuity plan for your college/unit. They may include:

- Senior administration
- College/unit staff
- Staff from other depts/units (including an emergency planner)
- Union/prof assoc, etc.
- Other stakeholders

Do you have a clear idea of the tasks/functions of your staff? Should the tasks be documented (procedure manuals) for use during a pandemic wave?

Assign someone to this pandemic planning project with a view to being 90% done by summer 2007.

If unable to assign someone, how do you propose to address this contingency planning issue?

Decision-making and Reporting

Ensure someone will be in charge of making decisions within your college/unit about service levels during a pandemic. Devise a succession list showing who is second, third, fourth in line in this respect.

Who in your organization has responsibility for collecting/managing information about staff absenteeism? Does that person have a back up?

Develop a mechanism to identify absentees within one hour of scheduled start times. Specify the number of absentees that would trigger implementation of the contingency plan.

Develop a procedure that alerts your unit management if there are resource (human or materiel) problems that affect the delivery of your services.

Ensure you have a mechanism for regular reporting to your senior management during an emergency event.

Prepare a contact list (including preferred method for contact – phone, fax, newspaper, etc.) of all those who need to be notified about a service reduction or cancellation of any ‘medium’ or ‘low’ rated programs.

Surveillance/Attendance

If any of your programs require employees to be in close contact with others for any length of time, consider alternate ways to provide service. i.e. social distancing, use of protective face masks, plexi-glass counter barrier, etc.

Would your program be adversely affected if Public Health Officials closed schools as a protective measure? What would you have to do in the face of such an order?

If necessary, could employees work from home? Are there any other alternatives?

Do you encourage your staff to take part in the annual flu shot campaign?

Do you have any data on the average number of staff absences due to illness and vacation at different times of the year (monthly rates)?

Is there a requirement within your college/unit to monitor and report increasing staff absenteeism due to illness to other authorities? (e.g., Health and Safety Coordinator)

Materials and Supplies

Do you maintain an equipment/supply inventory to support your programs?

Do you keep shelf stocks of needed supplies, or do you replenish just before you run out?

Are you currently stocked with all necessary supplies for regular day-to-day functions?

Are there enough supplies to last through an 8 week flu pandemic episode? If not, how long would they last under normal circumstances?

Do you foresee a need to stockpile any resources that may be in short supply during a pandemic episode? If so, what items? Can you estimate the costs?

Does your school division foresee a need to use specialized equipment or facilities during a pandemic episode? (Surgical masks, rubber gloves, etc.)

Do you have processes in place that will ensure additional equipment, e.g. paper, cell phones, masks, rubber gloves, etc. can be obtained with minimum delay?

Collect the serial and model numbers of all computer equipment, printers, fax machines, photocopy machines, etc, in case repairs are needed

Who will authorize repairs and supply equipment orders? Arrange for other staff to have signing authority.

Is there a pre-approval process in place for purchasing additional supplies? If not, how long does it take for approval to be granted?

Delivery of Services

Ensure there will always be someone present to make decisions about reducing levels of service and/or cancelling services temporarily.

How will the reduction/temporary cancellation of schools regular services be communicated to the community and local stakeholders? Determine the method(s) and ensure availability of contact lists

Have you got programs that provide health services to the schools or to the public? If so, is the program/service likely to experience a 'surge' in demand? Determine and describe how you will handle any surge in demand.

Could any of the educational services be provided from another work location? Remotely from home via computer links? Determine where alternate sites, if any, should be.

Is it possible that alternative service providers could assist with maintaining your critical services? What duties would they have and what additional training would they require?

Has your school division developed a list of staff skills and professional competencies that are transferable to other job functions?

Do you foresee a need to develop support services for workers, such as transportation, daycare, meals and grief counseling?

Human Resources

Do you have a current list of staff, suppliers, and clients complete with contact information? Assign someone with the responsibility to keep the list current.

Do you have a current list of recently retired staff (complete with telephone numbers) who may be contacted in the event of extreme staff shortages?

Could you have staff/students stranded out of province or out of country when a pandemic strikes? Determine how you would communicate with and/or support them under these conditions.

Assign 2-3 people to handle communicating with the employees in your unit about pandemic issues. Ensure you have enough backup.

If your school has employees on emergency response teams, are there backup staff for them? Keep track of the teams/persons involved.

Who in your school is responsible for payroll data submissions? Designate and train staff to backup in this function.

In preparation for a staff shortage, identify critical roles/responsibilities that co-workers could fill. Are there critical roles that could be contracted out or handled by volunteers?

Ensuring Program Continuity

Alternative methods to assist in program delivery include moving staff from one job to another (cross training and procedure manuals), use of retirees, work from home, shifts, contracting out, or making adjustments in how things are currently done.

Describe what must be done to prepare your staff to switch to these methods

If coordination/support from another college/unit is needed to facilitate these alternatives, describe how that coordination should be handled.

Do you have programs that must continue, but do not lend themselves to these alternatives? Are there any other alternatives that would work? For example would the installation of a plexi-glass barrier allow you to maintain 'over the counter' services?

Training/Orientation

Start to prepare procedure manuals where deemed necessary. Detail any training that needs to be done to complement the manuals.

What orientation/education would you like to be arranged for your employees to raise awareness about a pandemic flu emergency?

Have employees been made aware of basic infection control guidelines to prevent the spread of the Flu?

Would your stakeholders need any special training/information if your plan involved changes to normal procedures? What would be required?

Communication

Identify what kind of notification of service reduction/cancellation you may need and ensure you have listed who needs to know about it. (radio, newspaper, letter, phone)

Should the notification of these stakeholders come from one of your own employees? If so assign someone to handle this task.

Does your school division have contact lists for all your suppliers, alternate suppliers and equipment repair persons? Are the lists current?

Are there people in your organization who have sole access to incoming information, e.g., business information, incidence reports, complaints, etc., if so, can you arrange for alternates to receive this information?

Does your school division maintain a central inventory of passwords to office equipment and electronic files? Is there an alternate for the person who has responsibility for this inventory?

If your information technology person is ill, who would you call if you experience computer problems?

Does your school division require two-way radios/cell phones to communicate with each other during and/or after hours? Is there an alternate form of communication?

If there is a problem with physical access to your work location, who should be called?

If regular mail service is interrupted, how much would that impact your operation? What alternative arrangements could be made?

Does your school division send out time-sensitive letters or documents? Is there a back up system for these?

How are courier packages generally received and sent out? Could this method continue during a pandemic? If not, are the alternatives?

Do you know how public service announcements and news releases are handled? Do you need to coordinate your school division news releases with anyone else?

Do you have a website where employees and the public can seek and access information on service delivery news?

SAMPLE LETTERS

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER#1 Prevention Letter

Dear Parents,

This letter will help your family prepare for a flu pandemic that could make many people sick.

It is important to know that at this time, there is no pandemic flu of any kind in Saskatchewan. There is also no bird/avian flu in Saskatchewan at this time.

Public health officials are worried the avian/bird flu virus may change so that it can infect people and spread easily from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic.

Public health officials want people to protect themselves against pandemic flu.

Here are some ways to protect your family:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- Teach your children to wash hands a lot with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for a pandemic flu outbreak. This information can also help your family get ready for any kind of emergency.

If you have questions, please contact your school board representative or healthcare provider.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS**Initial Pandemic Flu Outbreak #3: Use this letter to let parents know schools are open**

Dear Parents,

This letter will give you information about a flu outbreak in our area. Every year, some people get sick with the flu during the fall and winter months. This year, there is a new flu virus that is making many people in Saskatchewan sick. Health officials call it a “pandemic flu.”

A lot of students and teachers in our school are sick with the flu. We hope they will all get better quickly.

At this time, the provincial health department tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school. The schools will remain open. We will keep you updated with any important information.

To keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home.

Public health officials want you to protect you and your family against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- Teach your children to wash hands a lot with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay away at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and stay away from other people until they are better.
- Stay away from shopping malls, movie theaters or other places where there are large groups of people.

We are also giving you some tips about how to care for your family if they are ill.

If you have questions, please contact your school division office or healthcare provider.

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, students may be dismissed from school for days or weeks. The purpose of student dismissals will be to keep children from getting sick. If students are dismissed, children should stay at home. Begin planning now for childcare in your home.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #4 Expanded Outbreak:

Use this letter to let parents know schools are open and urge ill children to stay home

Dear Parents,

We wrote to you recently to tell you about a pandemic flu outbreak in our community. Here is some new information.

There are now even more students in our school who are ill with this flu virus. Still the provincial health department tells us that students who are not ill can continue to attend school. We will keep you updated with any important information.

To keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home.

Public health officials want you to protect yourself and your family against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness and take care of your family

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu, keep them away from the people who are not sick.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu and you cannot see a health provider, some things you can do to help them are:
 - Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
 - Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
 - For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, in adults, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life- threatening illness.
 - Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
 - Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.

- Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, students may be dismissed from school for days or weeks. The purpose of student dismissals will be to keep children from getting sick. If students are dismissed, children should stay at home. Begin planning now for childcare in your home.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #4 Expanded Outbreak:

Use this letter to let parents know schools are open and urge ill children to stay home

Dear Parents,

We wrote to you recently to tell you about a pandemic flu outbreak in our community. Here is some new information.

There are now even more students in our school who are ill with this flu virus. Still the provincial health department tells us that students who are not ill can continue to attend school. We will keep you updated with any important information.

To keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home.

Public health officials want you to protect yourself and your family against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness and take care of your family

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu, keep them away from the people who are not sick.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu and you cannot see a health provider, some things you can do to help them are:
 - Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
 - Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
 - For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, in adults, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.

- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
- Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, students may be dismissed from school for days or weeks. The purpose of student dismissals will be to keep children from getting sick. If students are dismissed, children should stay at home. Begin planning now for childcare in your home.

**SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS Students allowed to return to school #6:
Use this letter to inform parents students are allowed to return to school.**

Dear Parents,

Provincial health officials have declared the pandemic flu under control. Students are allowed to return to school on _____. At this time, students may safely return to class.

Even though students may return to class, there are still some people who are sick from the flu virus. And health officials say that pandemic flu outbreaks sometimes happen in waves. This means more people could become sick soon again. If more people get sick, students may need to be dismissed again. We will continue to give you any important information.

Because the flu can still be spread from person-to-person, please keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.

We are looking forward to seeing your children again.

Tips for Parents on coping with pandemic flu

Plan for an extended stay at home during a flu pandemic.

- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Ask your employer if you can work from home during a flu pandemic.
- Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income, if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Check with your school district for home learning activities. Have materials, such as books, on hand.
- Plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.

Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

Examples: Non-perishable foods Health and emergency supplies

- ~Ready to eat canned meats,
- ~Prescribed medical supplies such as fruits, vegetables, soups glucose and blood pressure monitoring
- ~Protein or fruit bars
- ~Soap and water or alcohol based hand wash
- ~Dry cereal or granola ~Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen
- ~ Peanut butter and jelly (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin)
- ~Dried fruit, nuts, trail mix ~Thermometer
- ~Crackers
- ~Vitamins
- ~Canned juices ~Fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte®
- ~Bottled water
- ~Flashlight with extra batteries
- ~Canned or jarred baby food
- ~Portable radio with extra batteries
- ~Baby formula
- ~Pet food
- ~Garbage bags
- ~Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

If someone in your home develops flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches):

- Encourage plenty of fluids to drink.
- Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life threatening illness.
- Sponging with tepid (wrist-temperature) water lowers fever only during the period of sponging. Do not sponge with alcohol.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within reach of the patient.
- All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.
- Keep other family members and visitors away from the person who is ill.
- Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

PRESS RELEASES

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE A:

Schools in the _____ School Division are open but parents should prepare.

The schools will remain open despite the pandemic flu outbreak in the province but parents are asked to prepare for possible student dismissals if the virus continues to spread.

School board officials and provincial health representatives are working together to monitor the situation and parents will be updated with any important information.

“At this time, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open. Our thoughts are with all of our families and children who are affected,” said (health official)

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials say they may need to dismiss students for a period of time. They urged parents to begin planning now for childcare in their home.

Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick. People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Health officials point out that recommendations may change during the course of a pandemic flu outbreak. For school updates, parents can call the school division office or the provincial health care office.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE B:

For immediate release (DATE) Contact: (PIO name and number)

Health officials order student dismissals from schools in Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County health officials have ordered the dismissal of students from schools as a result of the pandemic flu outbreak in the county.

Students may be dismissed for a period of time - days or even weeks. Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, Contra Costa Health Services has also ordered students and children be dismissed from colleges, day care centers and preschools.

Because it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather, health officials warn people to stay away from shopping malls, community centers and other places where germs can be spread.

“We know this is an anxious time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with the schools to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information,” said (Local Health Official)

According to LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIAL, the purpose of student dismissals is to limit contact among children to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. Because so many people are sick with the flu, health officials acknowledge that it may be hard to get a doctor’s appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. They provided some tips for residents to care for the sick at home:

- Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye’s syndrome, a life- threatening illness.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.