

# Basic Components of Pandemic Planning

**Every District should have an Emergency Management Plan that:**

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

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

## **Communication Plan**

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

## **Plan for continuity of learning or instruction**

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

**Identify stakeholders and partners. Identify a contact within the local public health department** and collaborate with that entity to create complementary plans, coordinate with other partners, and communicate consistently with the public.

**Identify and coordinate with other key stakeholders**, such as law enforcement, school security personnel, local emergency management office, businesses, community and faith-based organizations.

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

# Basic Components of Pandemic Planning

(continued)

Consider:

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

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

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

**Initiate or expand prevention and education efforts**

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

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

**Develop an Incident Command System (ICS)** specific to a pandemic that identifies roles and responsibilities of educators, law enforcement, and health officials in advance of an incident.

**Consider and plan with community partners to address issues specific to your school environment**, such as:

- Students with special needs, including those who are in special education, receiving supplemental services at school, English Language Learners, or have special health care needs;
- Working with Child Nutrition Directors to help families identify sources for feeding programs for students who receive meals at school in the event of long-term school closures;
- Potential social services needed during and after pandemic has ended;
- Possible alternative uses of school buildings during a pandemic (such as for mass immunizations or hospitals);
- Potential uses of school buses during pandemic and if/how this affects contracts;

# Basic Components of Pandemic Planning

(continued)

- Current alternative uses for schools and determine necessary policies/procedures under school closures;
- Capacity to address requirements for cleaning the building if it was used for community health needs or if there were sick students; and
- Fiscal, academic, emotional and physical recovery issues, including;
  - Return to learning;
  - Ability of students, family, and staff to access available mental health supports, particularly during a crisis if schools are cancelled;
  - Bereavement needs; and
  - Availability of mental health service providers, including community and faith-based organizations.

## Summary: Basic Components of Pandemic Planning

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

*An optional policy to consider on this issue.*

## **Instruction**

### **Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness**

#### **Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies**

The Board recognizes that a pandemic/epidemic outbreak is a serious threat that stands to affect students, staff, and the community as a whole. With this consideration in mind, the Board establishes this policy in the event the town/municipality and/or school district is affected by a pandemic/epidemic outbreak. At all times the health, safety and welfare of the students shall be the first priority.

#### **Planning and Coordination**

The Superintendent shall designate one or more staff members to serve as a liaison between the school district and local and state health officials. This designee is responsible for connecting with health officials to identify local hazards, determine what crisis plans exist in the school district and community, and to establish procedures to account for student well-being and safety during such a crisis. The designee shall work with local health officials to coordinate their pandemic/epidemic plans with that of the school district.

The Principal and/or school nurse or other designee shall develop a curriculum component to health classes that is designed to teach students about preventing or limiting the spread of communicable diseases.

With fiscal concerns in mind, the District shall purchase and store supplies necessary for an epidemic/pandemic outbreak, including but not limited to disinfectant products, face masks, water, examination gloves, and other supplies as recommended by the school nurse and/or School Medical Advisor.

The Superintendent shall develop procedures and plans for the transportation of students in the event of an evacuation. Such procedures shall include provisions for students who cannot be transported to home at the time of the evacuation.

#### **Response**

In the event anyone within the school is discovered or suspected to have a communicable disease that may result in an epidemic/pandemic, that person shall be immediately quarantined pending further medical examination. Local and state health officials shall be notified immediately.

In conjunction with local and state health officials, the Superintendent shall ascertain whether an evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place needs to be established. As soon as such a decision has been made, the school district shall attempt to notify the parents of all students.

## **Instruction**

### **Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness**

#### **Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies** (continued)

In the event of an evacuation, the Superintendent is charged with determining when the school shall re-open. In the event of a lockdown or shelter-in-place, the Superintendent shall notify all proper authorities and relief agencies to seek their assistance for the duration of the lockdown or shelter-in-place.

#### **Infection Control**

Any student or staff member found to be infected with a communicable disease that bears risk of pandemic/epidemic will not be allowed to attend school until medical clearance is provided by that individual's primary care physician or other medical personnel indicating that that person does not bear the risk of transmitting the communicable disease.

Students with excessive absences due to a communicable disease shall be given a reprieve from other Board policies relative to excessive student absences. Efforts will be made by the staff to determine what, if any, school work the student can complete while absent.

Staff members who are forced to miss excessive days of work shall first use any leave entitled to them through the Family and Medical Leave Act and/or accrued sick leave. If a staff member has still not received medical clearance to resume his/her work duties, absences in excess of a staff member's allotted leave will not affect the employees right to continued employment.

#### **Continuance of Education**

The Superintendent shall develop a plan of alternate means of educating students in the event of prolonged school closings and/or extended absences. Such a plan may include providing students with assignments via mail, local access cable television, or the school district's website.

The Superintendent is authorized to amend the traditional class schedule and schedule of days. Such a plan may include extending the school day, having school days held on Saturdays, the use of previously scheduled vacation days, and/or extend the school year beyond the previously established end of school year, within applicable statutory requirements.

(cf. 5141.22 – Communicable/Infectious Diseases)

(cf. 5141.6 – Crisis Management Plan)

(cf. 6114 – Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness)

(cf. 6114.6 – Emergency Closings)

## **Instruction**

### **Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness**

#### **Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies**

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-154a Professional communications between teacher or nurse and student.

10-207 Duties of medical advisors.

10-209 Records not to be public.

10-210 Notice of disease to be given parent or guardian.

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules.

19a-221 Quarantine of certain persons.

52-557b Immunity from liability for emergency medical assistance, first aid or medication by injection. School personnel not required to administer or render.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g, 45 C.F.R. 99.

Policy adopted:

## **Public Health Instructions During a Pandemic Flu**

Throughout a pandemic flu, people may be asked or required to do things to help hold back the spread of the disease in our community.

Here are some examples of what public health officials may ask people to do:

### **STAY HOME**

People who are sick should stay home. Children should not go to school if they are sick. Staying home will be absolutely necessary during a pandemic flu to limit the spread of the disease.

### **AVOID LARGE GROUPS**

People – even those who are well – should stay away from gatherings of people such as sporting events, movies and festivals. During a pandemic flu these kinds of events could be cancelled because large gatherings of people help spread the flu virus.

Isolation and quarantine are public health actions used to contain the spread of a contagious disease. If asked, it will be important to follow isolation and/or quarantine instructions.

### **ISOLATION**

Isolation is for people who are already ill. When someone is isolated, they are separated from people who are healthy. Having the sick person isolated (separated from others) can help to slow or stop the spread of disease. People who are isolated can be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or other healthcare facilities. Isolation is usually voluntary, but local, state and federal government have the power to require the isolation of sick people to protect the public.

### **QUARANTINE**

Quarantine is for people who have been exposed to the disease but are not sick. When someone is placed in quarantine, they are also separated from others. Even though the person is not sick at the moment, they were exposed to the disease and may still become infectious and then spread the disease to others. Quarantine can help to slow or stop this from happening. States generally have the power to enforce quarantines within their borders.

## **FACT SHEET: Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School**

**How Germs Spread:** The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This is called "droplet spread." This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sometimes germs also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

**How to Stop the Spread of Germs:** In a nutshell: take care to:

- Cover your mouth and nose.
- Clean your hands often.
- Remind your children to practice healthy habits, too.

***Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing:*** Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

***The "Happy Birthday" song helps keep your hands clean?*** Not exactly. Yet it is recommend that when you wash your hands – with soap and warm water – that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice!

***Alcohol-based hand wipes and gel sanitizers work too:*** When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

**Germs and Children:** Remind children to practice healthy habits too, because germs spread, especially at school.

The flu has caused high rates of absenteeism among students and staff in our country's 119,000 schools. Influenza is not the only respiratory infection of concern in schools – nearly 22 million schools days are lost each year to the common cold alone. However, when children practice healthy habits, they miss fewer days of school.

**More Facts, Figures, and How-Tos:** CDC and its partner agencies and organizations offer a great deal of information about hand washing and other things you can do to stop the germs that cause flu, the common cold, and other illnesses.

**SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS: Initial Pandemic Flu Outbreak: 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 our community sick. So many people are sick locally and in the United States that 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 county/state 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 yourself 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 Nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER). You can get more information from \_\_\_\_\_ . If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, schools may close for days or weeks. The purpose of closing schools will be to keep children from getting sick. If schools are closed, children should stay at home. Begin planning now for childcare in your home. Recommendations may change during the course of a pandemic flu outbreak.

**SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS 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 county/state health department tells us that students who are not ill can continue to attend 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 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.

Call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER) or \_\_\_\_\_.

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

**SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS School Closure: Use this letter to inform parents schools are closed.**

Dear Parents,

District/State health officials have ordered all schools in the District to close. This order is because of the pandemic flu situation in our community/area. All schools are immediately closed until further notice and children should stay home.

Schools may be closed for days or even weeks to reduce contact among children and stop the spread of the flu. We know that many students and their families are very sick. We know this is a hard time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill.

Because the flu is easily spread from person-to-person, it is not safe for large groups of people to gather. During this time, both children and adults should stay away from other people and groups as much as possible. They should not gather in other locations such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

We know that it may be hard to get a doctor's appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. Here are some tips for helping those who are sick with the flu:

- Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water).
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, 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.
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

For more information, call your healthcare provider or \_\_\_\_\_.

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will reopen.

**SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS School Re-Opens: Use this letter to inform parents schools are re-opened.**

Dear Parents,

Local/State health officials have declared the pandemic flu is under control. Our school will open again on \_\_\_\_\_. At this time, students may safely return to class.

Even though school is opening, there are still some people who are sick from the flu virus. 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, schools may need to close 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.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. 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, fruits, vegetables, soups
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Dried fruit, nuts, trail mix
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Bottled water
- Fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte®
- Canned or jarred baby food
- Baby formula
- Soap and water or alcohol based hand wash
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin)
- Thermometer
- Vitamins
- Prescribed medical supplies such as, glucose and blood pressure monitoring
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Portable radio with extra batteries
- Manual can opener
- 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.

For more information, call your healthcare provider or visit the Connecticut Department of Public Health website at <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/site/default.asp?>, or visit the federal government's pandemic flu website: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>. Also, Federal Emergency Management Agency at <http://www.fema.gov>.

**SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS – AN OUTBREAK**

- 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 local health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information.
- At this time, under the guidance of the county health department, 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.
- If pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials may need to close schools for an extended period of time (for example, up to 6 weeks).
- The purpose of closing schools will be to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. If schools are closed, children should stay at home.
- We urge parents to plan now for the possibility of schools closing. Arrange day care, and home schooling.
- 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.
  - Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. We will make public announcements through the media and parents can call the school district's hotline at (INSERT HOTLINE).
- For more information on pandemic flu and prevention, visit \_\_\_\_\_ or call the Health Emergency Information Line: \_\_\_\_\_.