



Pandemic Preparedness Checklist

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**For Your Organization**

October 2005

## Introduction

Pandemic influenza is an outbreak of influenza occurring over a wide geographic area of the world affecting many people in many countries. Epidemics of influenza have been known to occur for centuries. Three influenza pandemics have occurred in the past century: Spanish (1918), Asian (1957) and Hong Kong (1968). It is estimated by experts that another pandemic will occur, so undertaking pandemic planning needs to be done internationally, nationally, provincially, and locally.

Public Health began developing their pandemic plan in 2001 with community input. The Pandemic Influenza Contingency Plan has been prepared to allow Grey Bruce to better respond to a pandemic. It is intended to complement the Emergency Response Plan as well as the municipal Emergency Response Plans and the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic. It is a living document that is reviewed and amended based on new scientific developments and planning information provided by the counties as well as the provincial and federal pandemic planning agencies. The Plan can be viewed at [www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca](http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca).

Unplanned events can have a devastating effect on businesses and can make it difficult or even impossible to carry out day-to-day activities. This could cause the loss of important customers or cause you to go out of business. With good planning the potential impact can be minimized. A carefully thought out business continuity plan will make coping in a crisis easier and may enable you to minimize disruption to the business. This pandemic preparedness checklist for your agency has been prepared to assist in assessing your organization's pandemic influenza preparedness.

Pandemic planning is an organization-wide project and should incorporate all aspects of your business in order to be successful. For ease of use, the checklist has been divided into subject areas. Use these general areas to begin assessment and to help identify key departments that should be involved in planning.

- Planning Committee
- Decision Making and Reporting
- Activation/Termination of Pandemic Influenza Response
- Infrastructure
- Vaccines and Antivirals
- Surveillance
- Logistics
- Records and Record Keeping
- Delivery of Services
- Materials and Supplies
- Health Care and Health Care Services/Institutions
- Human Resources
- Communication
- Training and Orientation
- Testing of Plan
- Post-pandemic

## Planning Committee

An internal planning committee made up of members from all areas of the organization can give insight to the required details for planning. Identify key roles your organization and ensure all areas are represented.

- Who internally needs to be on the planning committee?
- Who externally needs to be on the planning committee?
  - Elected officials?
  - Police and other first responders?
  - Hospital/Long Term Care Homes/Home care sectors?
  - ER physicians/family practitioners/infectious disease practitioners?
  - Laboratories/pathologists?
  - Municipal Emergency Management?
  - Communications/media?
  - Mortuary services?
  - Legal?
  - Community services (water, sewage, utilities, etc.)?
- Labour unions or bargaining agents?
- Who is identified as being in charge in the event of a pandemic episode and are the roles of the various stakeholders clearly defined? Who makes what decisions? Who notifies the various stakeholders? A list outlining key stakeholders, including roles and contact information, can be helpful.
- All municipalities are required to have emergency preparedness plans. Is your pandemic influenza plan integrated with your community's emergency preparedness plan(s)? Have you reviewed the Public Health plan and the provincial plan, to ensure your plan takes into account what will be happening in the community?
- Who has responsibility for procurement matters, such as ordering resources and/or equipment during an emergency episode? Who is that person's back-up?
- Who needs to approve the pandemic response plan?

## Decision Making and Reporting

In order to be able to make clear and timely decisions and to have a uniform plan it is essential to know who is in charge of required activities related to your organization and how that might change if a limited outbreak becomes a pandemic.

- Who will be in charge of organization services and decision making (including when to implement your pandemic plan) regarding services during a pandemic?
- What departments/programs/components of your organization are essential? Are there any departments/programs that can be shut down? How could resources/personal be redirected from these areas to essential areas?
- What will be the mechanism for reporting to Public Health or local councils if requested?
- Is there a contact list of all employees (including those recently retired who may be able to assist if required) and does your organization maintain a fan-out list?
- Is there a contact list of all internal and external client and partner organizations and stakeholders?
- Is there a contact list of all senior staff within your organization (including home contact information) in the event of emergency decision making?
- If public transportation became a problem, can employees arrange alternate forms of transportation to work?
- If necessary, could staff live at the work location for some period of time?
- Have you prepared site-specific notification for office closures and contacts for the public?

## Activation/Termination of Pandemic Influenza Response

The decision to activate your organizational pandemic plan could be based on direction from government, Public Health or an internal committee. The decision to activate the plan is a difficult one, and clear responsibilities set out ahead of time will aid in the decision making process. In case of illness the decision makers in your organization require back-up decision makers who are aware of the organization's plan.

- Who has responsibility for activating the pandemic influenza response plan in your organization? Who is that person's back-up?
- Who are your organizations decision makers? Who are the alternate decision makers? What cross-training do these back-up employees require to do the job?
- Identify the process within your organization through which the decision will be made to terminate the pandemic influenza response plan.

## Infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to the structure of your organization and its role within the community. How might this change during a pandemic and how would you respond to the community? Can you ensure that you can meet the following needs of the public as they apply to your organization?

- What is the role of your organization with respect to the availability, provision and security of safe drinking water and food?
- What is the role of your organization with respect to mass feeding programs?
- What role does your organization play with respect to mass housing or housing those with special needs, e.g., the ill, elderly, children etc.?
- What role can your organization take on with respect to home care and childcare?
- What role can your organization take with respect to increased death rates? Do you have a role in funeral services? Burials?
- What is the role of your organization with respect to maintaining uninterrupted sanitation services, e.g. sewage system, garbage, landfill etc.?
- What is the role of your organization with respect to public communications? Do you work in media (e.g. radio, newspaper) that is integral to public knowledge?

## Vaccines and Antivirals

Influenza vaccine is the most effective preventive measure available. The implementation of a yearly routine vaccination program will prevent illness in your organizations employees. When a vaccine that matches the pandemic strain is made available, having a structure in place to both assist and track employee vaccination will be beneficial.

- If your organization is involved with the provision of essential services (such as, health care workers, or emergency/essential service workers) has your organization developed a priority list for vaccinations and for making antiviral medication available to employees?
- If your organization does not provide the above services, how will you communicate to your employees about the location of community immunization clinics?
- Do you have a mechanism in place to track employee immunizations?

## Surveillance

Surveillance consists of ongoing collection, interpretation and dissemination of pandemic data to enable the development of evidence-based interventions. Public Health will be conducting community wide surveillance to track the disease and determine interventions. Public Health will be monitoring the community's illness rates through contacts with hospital infection control, large workplaces and community physicians that have agreed to provide illness rates. Schools and daycares are also required to report illness rates to Public Health. Internal monitoring for illness among staff and notifying Public Health if you see a large number of ill employees will help with overall community surveillance. Conducting internal surveillance will also help determine worker availability.

- Who in your organization has the responsibility of monitoring staff illness/ availability?  
Who is that person's back-up?
- Who needs to receive surveillance data locally and how will the information be disseminated in a timely manner? What networks are already in place?

## Logistics

Implementation of your pandemic plan is essential for your organization to run smoothly during a pandemic. Having your organization in working order allows employees to continue working to their best ability while under stressful circumstances.

- Who has signing authority for expenditures during a pandemic episode? Who is that person's back-up?
- Are there clearly stated policies and procedures that cover signing authority and acquisitions? Do they include authority in the event of an emergency/ pandemic situation?
- What is the staff capacity of your organization and are there provisions to bring in additional staff, retired staff and/or volunteers?
- Has an inventory been prepared for specialized equipment/facilities that may be needed during a pandemic episode?
- Is there a mechanism that will ensure that additional equipment, such as pagers, cell phones, etc., can be obtained with minimum delay?
- Who has authority for ordering repair/replacements for equipment? Who is that person's back-up?

## Records and Record Keeping

Keeping records for your business could be essential after a pandemic. Has your organization developed appropriate record keeping procedures for items, such as:

- Complaints and issues raised during a pandemic episode?
- Significant decisions that were made during the pandemic influenza episode?
- Employee illness and availability?

## Delivery of Services

During a pandemic your organization's staff may be reduced substantially. As a result, some services provided by your organization may need to be temporarily stopped. Deciding ahead of time what services are not essential and when to discontinue them is important.

- Have services in your organization been prioritized across departments and within departments to take into account minor to major lack of staff availability due to illness? Will you be able to operate with 1/3 of your staff off ill? What are your priority departments/services/programs?
- Who will make decisions about reducing levels of service and/or terminating services temporarily?
- Is there a pre-approval process in place for purchasing additional supplies? If not, how long does it take for approval to be granted?
- How will reduction/temporary termination of regular services be communicated to local stakeholders and the public?
- Could any of your organizations services be provided from another work location?

## Materials and Supplies (see Appendix II)

Basic materials and supplies are necessary for regular day-to-day functioning. Employees may be temporarily unable to complete day-to-day work tasks without the availability of supplies and equipment. This in turn will put your organization on hold until the supplies and materials become available again.

- Are you currently stocked with all necessary supplies for regular day-to-day functions? How long will they last?
- Does your organization have contact lists for all your suppliers/alternate suppliers?
- Does your organization have access to inventory (including serial numbers) of all computer equipment, printers, fax machines, and photocopiers for repairs?
- Does your organization have contact lists for all equipment repair persons?
- Who authorizes repairs and supply/equipment orders? Are there other employees who can take over this responsibility in the event of a pandemic outbreak?

## Health Care and Health Care Services/Institutions

During a pandemic the health care sector will have many demands put upon it. What is the role of your organization with respect to assisting with service demands in the health care sector? Do you provide service in...

- Health care facilities? Long-term care facilities? Homes for the aged? Homes for special care?
- Patient transportation?
- Intake/triage?
- Patient care (both pandemic and non-pandemic patients)?
- Food service/sanitation?
- Has your organization developed a list of skills and professional competencies of your staff that are transferable to health care institutions?
- Has relevant staff been made aware of the infection control guidelines, clinical care guidelines and triage guidelines that are available through Health Canada?
- Have support services been planned for health care workers, such as transportation, day-care, meals, psychological support, and grief counselling?
- Has a recovery phase been planned for (i.e. depleted supplies, backlogs)?
- Have services been prioritized?

## Human Resources

Human resources is required to keep track of employee absenteeism within your organization. Having a contact list of people to call to fill in for regular staff is important and can be beneficial for any emergency. It is important to remember that regular job descriptions may change during an emergency, such as a pandemic.

- Has your organization prepared an inventory of staff skills in the event that people from your organization are required to perform duties/functions in other departments/organizations to maintain essential services?
- Do you currently have adequate staffing for regular day-to-day function?
- Is there a current list of staff complete with telephone numbers? Who is responsible to ensure that it remains current?
- Do employees have access to a list of all employees and relevant stakeholders?
- Who may be contacted in the event of extreme staff shortages?
- Is there a current list of recently retired staff and their telephone numbers?
- Have volunteer/re-assigned staff members' liability issues been addressed?
- In the event of a staff shortage, what roles/responsibilities would be taken on by external contract workers and volunteers and what roles/responsibilities would be taken on by co-workers?
- Who has the authority to hire contract/temporary workers and to take on volunteers? Is there a back-up person for this job?
- Who will be in charge of communicating to the employees in your organization? Do you have a back-up person or persons to take on this responsibility?
- Who will represent your organization on community emergency response teams and are there back-ups to those persons?
- Who will be responsible for payment issues related to overtime and/or additional salary issues? Is there a back-up person or persons to take on this responsibility?
- Have employee unions been notified regarding changes that may occur in a pandemic situation?
- Do you have a buddy system for reporting illness during pandemic?

## Communication (see Appendix I)

Communication strategies are an important component in managing any infectious disease outbreak and are essential in the event of a pandemic. Accurate and timely information at all levels is critical in order to minimize unwanted and unforeseen social disruption and economic consequences and to maximize the effective outcome the response.

- Who has the primary responsibility for communicating with the public? Who is that person's back-up?
- Are there people in your organization who have sole access to incoming information, such as incidence reports, complaints, etc.? Who is their back-up?
- Does your organization maintain a central inventory of passwords to office equipment and electronic files? Where is this located?
- If your information technology person is ill, to whom can you turn if you were experiencing computer problems?
- How does your staff communicate with each other during office hours and after office hours? Is there an alternate form of communication they can rely on, such as cell phones, pagers, etc.?
- Who do your employees communicate with externally on a daily/weekly basis? If employees are sick, who could contact these external people?
- Who are your security contacts if there is a problem with physical access to your work location and who are their back-ups?
- If mail service is interrupted are there critical items that you would need to make alternative arrangements for delivery or receipt?
- Does your organization have occasion to send out time-sensitive letters or documents and is there a back-up system for them?
- How are courier packages generally sent out and received?
- What medium will be used for public service announcements and news releases? Do you have public service announcements prepared in advance for television, radio and print outlets? Have trusted media contacts been identified?
- Who is authorized to issue public service announcements/news releases? Is there a back-up? How fast can they be produced and approved?
- Will there be a website/telephone call-in line to update Public Health, local employees and the public with the latest pandemic news?

## Training/Orientation

Once your plan has been developed it is important to orient your staff to the plan and train them appropriately. Holding education sessions to help raise awareness of the threat of a pandemic and what that means for them at work and home. Staff should have input on the development of the plan as they will be the ones affected during a pandemic.

- What are the training needs for internal staff and external stakeholders pertaining to pandemic influenza and your organizations' pandemic influenza response plan? What additional training will be required?
- Does staff have adequate understanding of their role in preventing the spread of disease, such as staying home from work if they're ill, practicing respiratory etiquette, getting routine immunizations, safe use of personal protective equipment if needed (ie. gloves, masks, gowns), and a working understanding of universal precautions? How will staff receive this training?
- Has staff been educated regarding home emergency preparedness?
- Have education materials been pre-prepared?
- Has staff cross-training been addressed? Is there a way to implement cross-training experiences before a pandemic to help if staff illness rates require re-organization of duties?

## Testing of Plan

Working through your plan will help to bring out details that may have been missed. Having a tabletop exercise with staff is an excellent teaching opportunity as well as a way to get input from staff surrounding details that can be incorporated into your organizations' pandemic influenza plan.

- How will you test and/or evaluate your pandemic influenza response plan?
- How will you test your communication systems, such as fan-out?

## Post-Pandemic

It is important to realize that after the initial outbreak of a pandemic, a second and possibly third wave may occur. Reviewing and evaluating your records from the first wave can be beneficial to your organization. Planning for the pandemic can be just as important as planning for after the pandemic because you will want to get your organization running again at full service as soon as possible.

- Prepare for the 2nd/3rd waves of an outbreak.
- What are the immediate lessons learned from the previous wave?
- In the event of reduction and/or termination of services during a pandemic episode, who will decide to reinstate full service?
- Who will have the authority to notify the various employees, clients and stakeholders regarding services offered by your organization?
- Who will be responsible for evaluating your response to the pandemic?
- What factors should be examined as part of the evaluation?
- Have psycho-social services been provided for?

## Appendix I: Emergency Risk Communications - Anticipated Questions/Immediate Response to Inquiries

### Emergency Risk Communication: Anticipated Questions

Individuals/employees want your message to answer:

- Am I and my family safe?
- What have you found that will affect me and my family?
- What can I do to protect me and my family?
- Who (what) caused this problem?
- Can you fix it?

The media and communities want your message to answer:

- Who is in charge here?
- How are those who got hurt getting help?
- Is this thing being contained?
- What can we expect?
- What should we do?
- Why did this happen? Don't speculate. Repeat facts of the event, describe data collection effort and describe treatment from fact sheets.
- Did you have forewarning this might happen?
- Why wasn't this prevented from happening (again)?
- What else can go wrong?
- When did you begin working on this (ie. were notified of this, determined this, etc.)?
- What does this data/information results mean?
- What bad things aren't you telling us? Don't forget the good.

## Appendix II: Emergency Operation Centres & Equipment

Item	Number Required	Current Location	Notes
Large room able to hold 50 to 100 people			
Smaller room for meetings			
Large room for media conferences (with multimedia projector, lighting, sound system, screen audio pool feed-boxes for media, chairs, etc.)			
Hard copies of important information			
Numerous jacks for laptop computers			
Satellite telephones			
Telephones			
Cell phones			
Pagers			
Short wave radios			
Desktop computers			
Laptop computers			
Printers			
Video and cassette recorders			
Numerous power outlets			
Bulletin boards, flip charts and markers			
Photocopier			
Fax machine			
Desks and chairs			
Office supplies			
Food and beverages			
Emergency generator			
Megaphone			