

# PANDEMIC PLANNING GUIDE FOR ALBERTA SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

---

July 2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>WHY THIS GUIDE?</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009 INFLUENZA</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>AVIAN INFLUENZA (H5N1)</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>THE PLAN OF THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>I KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE PANDEMIC PLANNING</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>II DEVELOPING A PANDEMIC PLAN</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<i>Common Law Duties</i> .....	<i>13</i>
<i>Statutory Duties</i> .....	<i>14</i>
<i>Contractual Obligations of School Authorities</i> .....	<i>23</i>
<b>B. ISSUES UNIQUE TO THE PANDEMIC PLAN PROCESS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>C. PROACTIVE STEPS IN PANDEMIC PLANNING</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>D. WHEN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC REACHES CANADA</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>E. WHEN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC REACHES ALBERTA</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>F. FOLLOW UP</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>G. CHECKLIST</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>PANDEMIC INFLUENZA: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – A SUPERINTENDENT’S RESOURCE</b> .....	<b>46</b>
SCHEDULE “A” .....	53
SCHEDULE “B” .....	54
SCHEDULE “C” .....	55
SCHEDULE “D” .....	56
SCHEDULE “E” .....	57
SCHEDULE “F” .....	58
SCHEDULE “G” .....	60
SCHEDULE “H” .....	61
SCHEDULE “I” .....	62
SCHEDULE “J” .....	63
SCHEDULE “K” .....	64
SCHEDULE “L” .....	65
SCHEDULE “M” .....	66
SCHEDULE “N” .....	67
SCHEDULE “O” .....	68

## **FOREWORD**

In the event of an influenza pandemic, Alberta School Authorities will have an important role to play in protecting the health and safety of their students and staff. This Pandemic Planning Guide for Alberta School Authorities is intended to assist School Authorities in developing and/or improving their plans to prepare for, and respond to, an influenza pandemic. The Guide recognizes the importance of close collaboration between School Authorities and Alberta Health Services and it advocates for the coordination of community-based pandemic response planning.

Local School Authority planning activities should address:

- (a) The protection of students and staff;
- (b) Coordination of essential school business operations based on risk management principles;
- (c) Preparation for the orderly closure of school operations (in the event this is required) and eventual school reopening; and
- (d) Potential use of school facilities by community partners during the pandemic.

The contents of this document provide many sample documents that can be used or adapted to the local needs of each School Authority. Should you wish to communicate with a Staff Resource Person at Alberta Education to consult further about your pandemic readiness planning, contact:

Andrew Wilson, Workforce Planning and Development Branch  
Alberta Education  
780-644-7139 (toll free by dialing 310-0000 first)  
[Andrew.Wilson@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Andrew.Wilson@gov.ab.ca)

Thank you for the steps you are taking to ensure the health and safety of students and staff.

Keray Henke  
Deputy Minister  
Alberta Education

## **WHY THIS GUIDE?**

The Pandemic Planning Guide for Alberta School Authorities (the “Guide”) is designed to assist School Authorities in navigating this process and provide practical assistance on how to prepare an influenza pandemic plan.

This Guide does not provide a cookbook approach to pandemic preparedness. Each School Authority has its own history, culture, and way of doing business. Each School Authority can customize its pandemic plan to meet its unique local needs.

This Guide is designed to help users anticipate specific issues that may affect the operations of School Authorities and to assist School Authorities to prepare staff, students, and parents for a crisis situation.

Some of the information in this Guide is based on common sense, like teaching students to wash their hands and cover their mouths when they cough. Other planning elements will take more time to develop and will require a more coordinated effort.

One of the key themes within this Guide is the need for coordination among local, municipal, provincial, and federal officials. Although School Authorities may have experience dealing with communicable diseases, generally this experience has been limited to isolated situations where the medical community knew what the disease was, how to treat it, and how to contain transmission.

The H1N1 influenza virus (2009) has been reported worldwide and the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a pandemic. The virus is now referred to as “pandemic H1N1 influenza virus” or “Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.” Cases of illness have continued to be reported in Alberta over the summer months, a time when influenza activity would normally be expected to be minimal. This Guide will assist School Authorities as they review and update their Pandemic Plans.

## PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009 INFLUENZA

The H1N1 flu virus is a new strain of pandemic influenza which is different than the seasonal flu. People have no natural immunity to protect against this virus. The H1N1 flu virus emerged in April 2009 and surveillance of its spread shows that it is affecting more young and healthy people than the regular seasonal flu, which normally affects seniors and young children. People with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women may be at a greater risk for severe illness.

The H1N1 flu virus is a respiratory illness that affects the nose, throat and lungs. This virus usually affects pigs, but has been transferred to humans.

The H1N1 flu virus has caused primarily mild illness in Canada, but Canadians need to be prepared to respond to a potentially more severe form of the virus that may emerge this fall.

The H1N1 flu virus is contagious and is spread the same way as regular seasonal influenza. This happens when an infected person coughs or sneezes and their germs enter the nose, eyes, or throat of another person. The germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, and can be picked up on hands and transmitted to the respiratory system when someone touches their mouth and/or nose. It is not possible to catch it by eating pork or pork products or through blood transfusions.

More research is being done on how long a person can be infectious (be able to spread the virus to others), but it is believed that this period is for one day before the onset of symptoms and continues for approximately seven days after symptoms have started. The time it takes between being infected and experiencing symptoms is between two and seven days.

### Symptoms

---

#### Almost always:

- Cough and fever

#### Common:

- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Decreased appetite
- Runny nose

#### Sometimes:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

### Prevention

---

- Wash hands often
- Keep common surfaces disinfected
- Cough and sneeze into your arm, instead of your hand
  - If you are sick, stay home until your symptoms are gone and you feel well enough to participate in all activities
  - If you get flu-like symptoms and are pregnant, have underlying health problems or if your symptoms get worse, contact your health care provider.

### Be Prepared

---

Make preparations to care for yourself and your loved ones. Make sure you have the following items on hand:

- Pain and fever medication, like Tylenol or Advil, to treat fever and headaches
- A thermometer
- Extra supplies of any essential medication, like insulin for diabetics
- Cleaning supplies, like household disinfectant,
- Soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer to keep hands clean
- Non perishable food, like canned soup and fruits and vegetables and liquids, like water and juice, in case you can't get to the grocery store.

### Treatment

---

If you get flu-like symptoms and are pregnant or have underlying health problems contact your healthcare provider.

If you get flu-like symptoms and are otherwise healthy, you should stay home to recover. If your symptoms worsen or you experience difficulty breathing or serious shortness of breath, it is important to seek medical attention.

Anti-virals are drugs used for the early treatment of influenza. If taken shortly after getting sick (within 48 hours), they can reduce influenza symptoms, shorten the length of illness and potentially reduce the serious complications of influenza. Anti-virals do not prevent you from getting sick.

Canada has a National Antiviral Stockpile of 55 million doses of two antiviral drugs – Tamiflu and Relenza. Both are effective in treating H1N1 flu virus. This stockpile is enough for all Canadians who will need and want treatment.

Anti-virals are recommended for the treatment of moderate to severe illness, and for people at risk of severe disease. Your doctor will decide if treatment is right for you.

## Vaccination

Influenza vaccines (also called flu shots) help you to prevent getting sick by introducing your body to a weakened or dead version of the virus to teach your body to build immunity to it.

This year, there will be vaccines for both types of flu – one for the regular seasonal influenza, and one for the H1N1 flu virus.

Canada has a contract in place with GlaxoSmithKline to produce 50.4 million doses of H1N1 flu virus vaccine. This is enough vaccine for all Canadians who need and want protection.

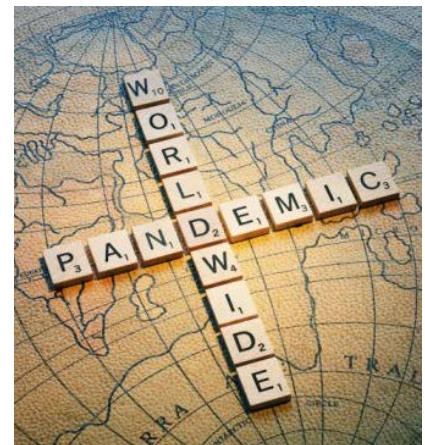
The vaccine is expected to be available in November 2009. Once the vaccine is approved for use, the Government of Canada will make recommendations on how many doses will be required.

### AVIAN INFLUENZA (H5N1)

The World Health Organization (the “WHO”) defines Avian Influenza as a contagious viral disease that can affect all species of birds but can, less commonly, infect mammals. Avian Influenza viruses are highly species-specific, but on rare occasions, have crossed the species barrier to infect humans.

An influenza pandemic occurs when a novel influenza A virus strain emerges with an ability to efficiently spread in human populations and cause significant morbidity and mortality. Since the 1500’s, influenza pandemic has occurred 3 to 4 times per century. In the last century, there were 3 pandemics: the “Spanish Influenza” of 1918 (H1N1), the “Asian Influenza” of 1957 (H2N2) and the “Hong Kong Influenza” of 1968 (H3N2).

Recently, a new influenza strain – influenza A (H5N1) – is spreading through bird populations across Asia, Africa, and Europe, infecting domesticated birds, including ducks and chickens, and long-range migratory birds. The Avian Influenza virus is not usually passed on to humans. However, there are cases of humans getting Avian Influenza from handling sick birds. The first recorded appearance of H5N1 in humans occurred in Hong Kong in 1997. Since then, the virus has infected over 200 people with a mortality rate over 55 percent.



At this time, the H5N1 virus is primarily an animal disease. Human infections have been the result of individuals directly in contact with poultry infected with H5N1. If the virus develops the capacity for sustained, efficient, human-to-human transmission, it could result in a pandemic.

### THE PLAN OF THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

The Province of Alberta has developed a response plan to a possible pandemic emergency. In 1999, the Government of Alberta began work to prepare the health system and the province for an influenza pandemic. The work was led by Alberta Health and Wellness and involved a range of partners, including other provincial ministries, regional health authorities, municipalities, emergency response agencies, utility and transportation companies, and professional organizations.



The current version of the province of Alberta's response plan will be used in coordination with the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Contingency Plan, prepared by a partnership of federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

The goal of Alberta's plan is to reduce the number of influenza cases and deaths and to minimize disruptions to daily life by providing access to appropriate prevention, care, and treatment. The plan outlines roles, responsibilities and key activities before, during, and after an influenza pandemic. It is a work in progress, and will be updated and added to as situations change.

Who is responsible for what in a pandemic?

An influenza pandemic is an international health event. International, federal, provincial, and local agencies will work together to respond.

#### **International:**

- The WHO watches for the emergence of new strains of influenza throughout the world. If an influenza pandemic strain emerges, it will notify federal health authorities and provide information to governments, the media, and the public on immunization and anti-viral medication use.

#### **Federal:**

- Health Canada will provide nationwide coordination for the influenza response. They will monitor the spread of the disease in Canada, provide links with the WHO and other nations, and obtain and distribute vaccines.
- A National Pandemic Influenza Committee with representation from provincial, territorial, and the federal governments will coordinate a national influenza response.

#### **Provincial:**

- Alberta Health and Wellness will lead the health sector response. During an influenza pandemic, the department will establish a Pandemic Response Centre. It will support coordination with Alberta Health Services, coordinate vaccine delivery across the province, provide information, collect data on the spread of the disease in Alberta and help resolve any health care issues that may arise. Alberta Municipal Affairs will lead the response regarding the non-health consequences of a pandemic, primarily through Emergency Management Alberta (EMA). EMA

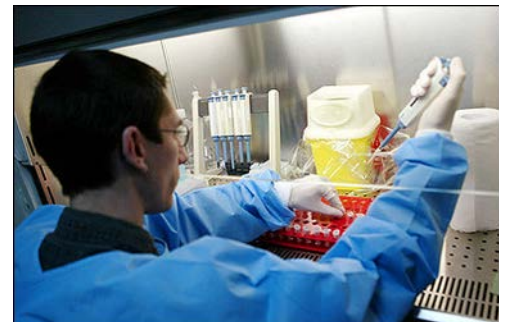


will communicate with municipalities, monitor the effect of the pandemic on essential services, coordinate volunteer activities and federal assistance programs, and monitor the need for support among families of victims.

- Each provincial government department will have contingency plans for the delivery of provincial services and will assist Alberta Health and Wellness, Emergency Management Alberta, Alberta Health Services, and municipalities to respond to a pandemic.
- All provincial ministries and municipal governments will have contingency plans for an influenza pandemic, which will include plans to keep essential services operating and identification of back-ups for key personnel.

### Local:

- Alberta Health Services will provide services to meet priority health needs. In addition, they will provide information on the number of cases, hospitalizations, deaths from influenza, deliver vaccines and anti-viral drugs, and establish and maintain communications in their regions.
- Municipal governments will set priorities for maintaining public safety and other essential public services (fire, police, waste management, water, and utilities), support Alberta Health Services in providing information to the public, and, where necessary, close public buildings and establish alternative care sites for the delivery of health care and immunization to the public.



### Alberta's pandemic plan (the "Plan") includes:

- Working with health officials worldwide to look for evidence of disease;
- Rapid distribution of a vaccine when it becomes available;
- Ensuring the health care system can manage the surge of patients during the pandemic; and
- Readying emergency planning services.

### The Plan is divided into three phases:

1. Pre-Pandemic Phase: a new type of influenza virus has not been detected anywhere or a new strain has been found only in a small number of people, most likely outside of Canada.
2. Pandemic Phase: the WHO declares that an influenza pandemic is underway and the new flu is detected in Canada. There will be localized outbreaks of the flu to start, followed by broader outbreaks that will occur in waves.

3. Post-Pandemic Phase: the number of cases and deaths from the flu returns to normal levels and the pandemic is declared to be over.

### Action will be taken in the following key areas:

- Surveillance;
- Immunization;
- Health services;
- Emergency preparedness; and
- Communications.



### What is an “Emergency?”

There is no single legal definition of the term “emergency” in Canadian law. Alberta’s Disaster Services Act defines an “emergency” as an

*event that requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the safety, health or welfare of people or to limit damage to property.*

An effective influenza pandemic plan should define the term “emergency” to ensure an appropriate response occurs when required.

### Risk Management

In risk management, foresight is critical; the focus of pandemic planning is on prevention. In the event of an influenza pandemic, it is possible employee absenteeism could be in the 30% to 40% range, with at least 20% absenteeism being likely. For example, employees may be absent due to their own illness, family illness, or employees may not report to work due to the fear of becoming ill. This level of absenteeism could result in school closures. Suppliers and other services upon which School Authorities rely such as garbage removal or food distributors may not be available. This shortage of supplies and services may last a few weeks with several waves of more extreme shortages.

It is important to plan ahead for an influenza pandemic because of the serious impact it may have on a School Authority. Pandemics evolve quickly and require a coordinated and timely response.

School Authorities should identify and assess exposures to injury and identify critical operations to be maintained during an influenza pandemic, and those operations a School Authority may have to suspend. Plans should be made to ensure the highest priority tasks can be completed with the resources, both physical and human, reasonably available to the School Authority.

As an example, School Authorities could:

- Plan disinfection programs, which would involve disinfecting common areas, and the distribution of hygiene supplies such as hand sanitizers, tissues, and disposal bins with hands-free lids. This may limit the virus' potential for transmission;
- Prepare protocols for handling staff/students who fall ill at school, including temporary isolation of contaminated areas, as well as travel and meeting restrictions;
- Provide for in-house education programs designed to teach about disinfection programs and to clarify the plan/policy of the School Authority, including test drills wherever possible;
- Identify individuals who would have the authority to direct potentially contagious staff and students to leave the school sites. Boards may wish to discuss this aspect with legal counsel. This may also require enhancing the security services, as police or other security services might be compromised due to a combination of absenteeism and heavy demand for area-wide security efforts elsewhere within the municipality;
- Establish a full communication plan (before, during, and after the influenza pandemic);
- Expand capacity for telecommuting or teleconferencing (providing it is available) to allow the provision of educational programming from home; and
- Plan physical modifications classroom space and office spaces.

### I KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE PANDEMIC PLANNING

Pandemic planning may seem overwhelming. It takes time and effort, but it is manageable. Here are some principles to the planning process:

- School Authorities should open the channels of communication well before a pandemic. Relationships need to be built in advance so that emergency responders are familiar with your School Authority. Cultivate a relationship with your stakeholder emergency managers, education and infrastructure officials, health and mental health professionals, hospitals, and local media. It is important these partners understand how a School Authority will respond in an influenza pandemic.
- Pandemic plans should be developed in partnership with municipalities, and other stakeholder groups, including law enforcement, fire safety officials, emergency medical services, as well as health and mental health professionals. Do not reinvent the wheel. These groups know what to do in an emergency and can be helpful in the development of your plan. Get their help to develop a coordinated pandemic plan.
- A common vocabulary is necessary. It is critical that School Authorities and emergency responders know the appropriate terminology. Use plain language to announce the need for action, for example, “evacuate” rather than “code blue.” With plain language everyone in the schools including new staff, substitute teachers, and visitors will know what type of response is necessary.
- Provide staff with ready access to the influenza pandemic plan so they can understand its components and act on them. People who have experienced a crisis often report that they go on “autopilot” during an incident. They need to know what to do in advance not only to get them through an incident but also to help alleviate potential panic and anxiety.
- Training and practice are essential for the successful implementation of pandemic plans. Most students and staff know what to do in case of a fire because the law requires them to participate in routine fire drills, but would they know what to do in an influenza pandemic? Training and practice will assist your staff to understand the plan.
- Your influenza pandemic plan is a living document. It needs to be reviewed and revised regularly. Documenting all actions taken while, during, and after a drill helps in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the plan. Use this information to strengthen the plan.



## II DEVELOPING A PANDEMIC PLAN

### A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

School Authorities are subject to obligations and responsibilities imposed by statutes. All levels of government – federal, provincial, and municipal – have the ability to make laws regulating or relating to School Authorities.

Through contracts, School Authorities voluntarily assume duties, obligations, and liabilities to the parties with whom they have contracts. These responsibilities are not forced on School Authorities, but rather are incurred as part of the usual business activities of the School Authority. Contractual obligations may be enforced against the parties to the contract as they are freely entered into and are supported by compensation or consideration from the other party.



School Authorities also have obligations by “tort” laws.

These laws have developed through the common law over a period of centuries and generally involve the duty to take reasonable care for the safety of one’s neighbours. Put another way, there is a general duty to conduct oneself in a manner that will not cause injury or loss to persons who might be impacted by one’s actions or inactions. These are the laws that provide for compensation for the victims of careless or intentional behaviour. Losses following school-related accidents fall in this area.

School Authorities have numerous practical and legal obligations in protecting the safety of the staff and students and providing First Aid when injuries or other medical emergencies occur. On the one hand, School Authorities have an obligation under health and safety legislation to ensure a safe workplace. On the other hand, they must meet these obligations without violating human rights and privacy obligations. The duty to accommodate an employee with a disability or the duty not to share personal medical information of a student may appear to contradict a School Authority’s duty to ensure schools are safe, particularly when dealing with staff or students who have a communicable disease. School Authorities also hold significant infrastructure and must be prepared to address infrastructure issues in the event of an influenza pandemic.

Below is a brief review of the legal framework in which School Authorities would operate in the event of an influenza pandemic.

#### Common Law Duties

The law of negligence is based upon the existence of a duty of care. Generally, one must take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which one can reasonably foresee would likely injure one’s neighbor. To satisfy the duty of care, one must demonstrate due diligence. This means that School Authorities must exercise a level of judgment, care, and prudence that a person would reasonably be expected to demonstrate under the particular circumstances.

Courts have held that the standard of care owed by School Authorities to students is that of a reasonably careful or prudent parent. Case law requires that the actions of a teacher conform to what a careful parent would do. This includes the duty to protect students from reasonably foreseeable risks of harm.

In terms of pandemic planning, a School Authority could take the following steps to potentially reduce risk of injury or illness:

- Create a pandemic plan;
- Create a pandemic checklist;
- Create a pandemic policy;
- Create a pandemic communication plan (For example, see Schedule “F” Media Tips);
- Create an agreement dealing with infrastructure and health-related services; and
- Create practices/resources to prevent and contain the spread of infection.

Employers could be liable, through possible claims in negligence. Lawsuits could be initiated by students, staff, or third parties who have been harmed. A litigant may allege the School Authority failed in its duties to him or her, including failure to maintain a safe workplace, failure to warn of a reasonably foreseeable risk, or negligent supervision.

School Authorities, like any other employers, can also be liable for the actions taken by their employees, within the scope of their employment, including during an influenza pandemic. It is essential, once a pandemic plan is created, to ensure employees and volunteers clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

### **Statutory Duties**

We briefly examine some Alberta statutes which relate to the issue of influenza pandemic.

- I. Legislation
- II. School Act

School Authorities have a duty to provide education to their students (consistent with the School Act and regulations) that will give the students the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by Alberta’s Minister of Education. School Authorities also have a duty to provide a safe and caring environment to each student enrolled in their schools that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours.

School principals and teachers must maintain order and discipline in their schools. School principals must also carry out those duties assigned to him/her by the School Authorities, subject to any applicable

collective agreement and the principal's contract of employment. More specifically the school principal has a duty to direct management of the school.

The School Act addresses the rights of certain individuals (children) to have access to an education program and their obligation to attend school. School Authorities shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure its students attend school. A student is excused from attending school if he/she is unable to attend by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause.

The School Act (sections 57 and 58) and related regulations address the issue of school closures. Under the School Act, School Authorities may temporarily close a school building if the health or safety of the students is endangered. If School Authorities close a school building, the School Act requires the School Authorities to forthwith remedy the situation causing the closure and reopen the school building. Also see Closure of Schools Regulation, Alberta Regulation 238/97.

### B. Occupational Health and Safety

The Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation, and Code combine to set out the legal requirements that you and your workers must meet to protect the health and safety of yourselves and others. These are minimum requirements.



### **Roles and Responsibilities – Workplace Health and Safety**

#### *General Responsibilities*

Employers must ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all workers at their work site. Workers must take reasonable care and co-operate with the employer to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others. (OHS Act, Section 2)

#### *Other Responsibilities*

- establish policies and procedures dealing with storing, handling, using and disposing of bio-hazardous materials
- ensure that workers are informed of the health hazards associated with exposure to the bio-hazardous material
- ensure that work exposure to bio-hazardous materials is kept as low as reasonably practicable! reasonably achievable
- establish policies and procedures for post-exposure management of workers exposed to biohazardous material. (OHS Act, Section 2 & OHS Code, Part 4 & 35)

### **Who is covered under the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code?**

Every occupation, employment, business, calling or pursuit, over which the Legislature has jurisdiction, except:

- farming or ranching specified in the regulations, and

- work in, to or around a private dwelling or any land used in connection with the dwelling that is performed by an occupant or owner who lives in the private dwelling or a household servant of the occupant or owner.

(OHS Act, Section 1)

### **Hazard Assessment and Control – Pandemic Influenza**

#### *What is a Hazard?*

A hazard is any situation, condition, or thing that may be dangerous to the safety or health of workers.

(OHS Code, Part 1)

#### *Employer Responsibilities*

Under Part 2 of the OHS Code, employers must perform a hazard assessment, including:

- assess a work site and identify existing or potential hazards
- prepare a written and dated hazard assessment, including the methods used to control or eliminate the hazards identified. A properly completed checklist is acceptable as a written hazard assessment
- where possible, involve workers in the hazard assessment
- make sure workers are informed of the hazards and the methods used to control the hazards.

(OHS Code, Part 2)

#### *When to Repeat the Hazard Assessment*

An employer must make sure that a hazard assessment is done:

- at reasonably practicable intervals to prevent the development of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions
- when a new work process is introduced
- when a work process or operation changes, or
- before the construction of a new work site.

(OHS Code, Part 2)

#### *Hand cleaning facilities*

- an employer must ensure that at least one wash basin or hand cleaning facility is provided in a toilet facility
- an employer must ensure that there is one wash basin or hand cleaning facility for every two toilets in addition to the wash basin or hand cleaning facility required if three or more toilets are required in a toilet facility
- an employer may substitute circular wash fountains for wash basins or hand cleaning facilities required on the basis that each 500 millimetres of the fountain's circumference is equivalent to one wash basin or hand cleaning facility.

(OHS Code, Part 24, Section 359)

#### *Personal Protective Equipment*

The employer must:

- Identify what is required and when it is required based on
- the hazard assessment
- Ensure workers are trained in use



- Ensure workers wear it and/or use it
- Ensure it is maintained and is in condition to perform the function for which it was designed
- Ensure PPE meets standards listed in the OHS Code.
- Workers must
- Maintain and use appropriate PPE as required.

(OHS Code, Part 18)

### *Respiratory Protective Equipment*

Respiratory Protective Equipment Employer must determine the degree of danger and whether the worker needs to wear Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) if the worker is or may be exposed to an airborne bio-hazardous material. The employer must consider the nature and the exposure circumstances of any contaminants or bio-hazardous material. When the effects of airborne bio-hazardous materials are known, the employer must provide and ensure the availability of RPE appropriate to the worker's known exposure circumstances. Where the hazard assessment identifies the need for RPE the specific legislated requirements are outlined in OHS Code, Part 2 and 18.

Some of the requirements include:

#### Training

- Employer must ensure all workers receive appropriate education, instruction or training with respect to hazards they may be exposed to and procedures and controls used to reduce exposure.

#### Code of Practice

- If respiratory equipment is used at a work site, an employer must prepare a code of practice governing the selection, maintenance and use of the RPE.
- In the case of a health care worker who may be exposed to airborne biohazardous material, and employer must ensure that the code of practice includes training on at least an annual basis.

#### Approval of Equipment

- Employer must ensure that RPE required at a work site is approved by NIOSH or another standard setting and equipment testing organization, or combination of organizations, approved by a Director of Occupational Hygiene.

#### Effective Face Seal

- Employer must ensure that RPE that depends on an effective facial seal for its safe use is correctly fitted and tested in accordance with CSA standard (z94-4-02).

(OHS Act, 33 and OHS Code, Part 18)

### *Communication*

An employer must ensure that workers affected by the hazards identified in a hazard assessment are informed of the hazards and the methods used to control or eliminate the hazards. The employer must ensure that a worker who may be exposed to a harmful substance at a work site is informed of the health hazards associated with exposure to that substance.

(OHS Code Part 2, Section 8 and Part 4, Section 21)

### *Training*

An employer must ensure that a worker who may be exposed to a harmful substance at a work site

is trained in procedures developed by the employer to minimize the worker's exposure to harmful substances and understands the procedures.

(OHS Code Part 4, Section 21)

#### *Competent Worker*

If work is to be done that may endanger a worker, the employer must ensure that the work is done:

- by a worker who is competent to do the work or
- by a worker who is working under the direct supervision of a worker who is competent to do the work.

"Competent worker" means adequately qualified, suitably trained and with sufficient experience to safely perform work without supervision or with only a minimal degree of supervision. (OHS Regulation, Section 1 and 13)

#### *Emergency Response Planning for Pandemic Influenza in the Workplace*

Employers must establish an emergency response plan in case of an emergency that may require rescue or evacuation. The plan must be written and affected workers must be involved in establishing the emergency response plan.

The emergency response plan must include:

- identification of potential emergencies (based on the hazard assessment)
- procedures for dealing with identified emergencies
- identification of, location of, and operational procedures for emergency equipment
- emergency response training requirements
- location and use of emergency facilities
- fire protection requirements
- alarm and emergency communication requirements
- first aid services requirements
- procedures for rescue and evacuation
- designated rescue and evacuation workers.

(OHS Code, Part 7)

#### *First Aid*

Requirements for the number of first-aiders and the level of first aid training required at all work sites are based on three criteria:

- how hazardous the work is,
- the time it takes to travel to a health care facility, and
- the number of workers per shift.

(OHS Code, Part 11)

### C. Criminal Code of Canada (Bill C-45)

Apart from prosecution under the OH&S Act, School Authorities, and individuals face potential prosecution for criminal negligence under the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code was amended (Bill C-45) to require all those who direct work to take reasonable measures to protect employee and public safety. Wanton or reckless disregard of this duty causing death or bodily harm could result in a charge of criminal negligence for employers, officers and directors, and corporations. These provisions clarify to some extent the duty of care owed by employers to employees, and are the result of the Westray Mine disaster in Nova Scotia. The government responded to a large public outcry about the lack of accountability for senior management. This remedy has been rarely used, but the results of a successful prosecution could have devastating effects on an individual.

The duty to take reasonable steps to protect staff and students may also apply to the risk related to an influenza pandemic.

### D. Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

On June 19, 2007, the Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007 (the “Act”) came into force. The Act amends and consolidates several other Alberta laws, such as the Disaster Services Act and the Public Health Act. The Act amends the Government Organization Act so that the Minister of Health may authorize the performance of restricted activities for the purpose of preventing, combating, or alleviating a public health emergency.

The Act allows Cabinet, if satisfied that there is a significant likelihood of influenza pandemic and prompt action is necessary, to suspend or modify the application of any provincial enactment, through the responsible Minister.

The Act also strengthens the prohibitions against terminating employment due to absences resulting from a public health emergency.

The length of a Public Health Emergency Order for influenza pandemic is extended to 90 days. Orders will expire at the earlier of the 90-day-Order or by if terminated by Cabinet.

The protection from liability for actions under Public Health Emergency Orders include the Crown, a Regional Health Authority, the Alberta Cancer Board, and provincial health boards for anything done or not done in good faith and directly or indirectly related to public health emergency.

The following discussion considers some of the Alberta statutes amended by the Act:

#### a) Disaster Services Act

The Act amends the Disaster Services Act which deals with emergency preparedness. The Disaster Services Act applies to the standards and authority for provincial, regional, and municipal emergency preparedness and response. The powers of the Minister and the local authorities are laid out in this statute.

### b) Public Health Act

The Public Health Act deals with communicable diseases and public health emergencies, isolation, quarantine and special measures, and the state of a public health emergency in Alberta.

#### Significant likelihood of influenza pandemic

If a state of public health emergency is called in respect of an influenza pandemic, the Chief Medical Officer may impose, authorize the absence from employment of any persons

- Who are ill with influenza pandemic, or
- Who are caring for a family member ill with influenza pandemic.

#### Termination of employment prohibited

Under the Public Health Act no employer shall terminate, restrict, or in any way discriminate against an employee for an absence from employment that is in respect of and occurs during a public health emergency that:

- i. has been declared by reason only of the employee having being subject to a properly issued certificate; (under section 39 of the Public Health Act);
- ii. has been declared by reason only of the employee having been subject to an isolation order (under section 44 of the Public Health Act);
- iii. has been declared by reason only of the employee having been conscripted pursuant to section 52.6(1)(c) of the Public Health Act;
- iv. is authorized under section 52.6(1.1) (an order authorizing one to be absent from work who is ill from influenza pandemic or who is caring for a family member ill with influenza pandemic).



#### Notification of communicable disease

According to the Public Health Act, where a teacher or a person in charge of an institution knows or has reason to believe that a person under their care, custody, supervision or control is infected with a communicable disease, the teacher or person in charge of an institution shall notify the Medical Officer of Health for Alberta Health Services.

### Notification of epidemics and other threats

According to the Public Health Act, teachers or a person in charge of an institution who knows of or has reason to suspect the existence of a communicable disease in epidemic form, or another illness or health condition occurring at an unusually high rate, or a communicable disease or another illness or health condition that is caused by a nuisance or other threat to the public health, shall immediately notify the Medical Officer of Health of the Regional Health Authority by the fastest means possible.

### Protection from liability

According to the Act, no action for damages may be commenced against a teacher or a person in charge of institution for anything done or not done by that person in good faith while carrying out duties or exercising powers under the Public Health Act or any other statute.

### c) Employment Standards Code

The Act amends the Employment Standards Code, which sets the minimum employment standards employers must meet.

An employee may make a written complaint to an Employment Standards Officer that his or her employment was suspended or terminated or that employee was laid off contrary to the Public Health Act.

### E. Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act

The Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act sets rules for an employer regarding discriminatory employment practices against their employees on a prohibited ground. For example, no person shall deny to any person any services; accommodations or facilities that are customarily available to the public on the basis of a specified ground of discrimination (see section 4 of this statute). In other words, staff and students may not be subject to discriminatory treatment by a School Authority on the basis of a disability.

### F. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (“FOIP”) sets out an employer’s obligations regarding access to, collection of, and disclosure of staff/student personal information.

For instance, FOIP sets out cases where personal information may be disclosed without consent. The disclosure of personal information of a student or staff member may be necessary if there are compelling circumstances affecting his/her health or safety. We recommend you discuss this with your labour lawyer.

### G. Employment Insurance

The Employment Insurance Act allows for a time frame in which special benefits (sickness) are available to an eligible claimant who cannot work because of illness or injury. Normally, there is a

waiting period unless the claimant has received paid sick leave from his/her employer for that period. In addition, EI benefit claimants are required to produce a medical certificate issued by a medical doctor or other medical professional.

## II. Regulations

### A. Communicable Disease Regulation

The Communicable Disease Regulation (the “Regulation”) defines an “epidemic” as the occurrence in a community of persons of a number of cases of a communicable disease in excess of normal expectations. The Regulation defines an “outbreak” as a distribution of cases of a communicable disease that is unusual in terms of time, place or persons affected. “School” means:

- a school operating under the School Act;
- a place where an early childhood services program is offered or provided, and
- a day care facility licensed under the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act.

It is recommended this Regulation be reviewed. It includes a list of diseases designated as communicable for the purpose of the Public Health Act. More specifically, the Regulation contains a section dealing with the influenza pandemic which is a “notifiable communicable disease” under the Public Health Act. The Regulation speaks about reporting requirements of the Medical Officer of Health, investigation of contacts and source of infection, isolation procedures, quarantine, and special measures.

The Regulation sets out very specific responsibilities with respect to reporting the presence of a communicable disease in epidemic form. Under the Regulation, a superintendent of any school, a principal and a teacher who knows of or has reason to suspect the existence of a communicable disease in epidemic form shall immediately notify the Medical Officers of Health from Alberta Health Services by the fastest means possible.

### B. Student Record Regulation

The Student Record Regulation requires School Authorities to share personal information about their students with the Medical Health Officer regarding voluntary health programs offered by the Regional Health Authority, including immunization for the purpose of communicable disease control.

### C. Government Emergency Planning Regulation

This regulation sets out the responsibilities of Disaster Services in relation to emergency preparedness. Each Government Department must prepare and maintain an emergency plan, and a business resumption plan.

One of the functions of the Department of Infrastructure in an emergency is the provision of lists of operating schools that may be used in emergency response activities. The Department of Education shall liaise with School Authorities to ensure safety of students and staff.

D. First Aid Standards

The first aid standards in a medical emergency are found in the Occupational Health and Safety Code. There is a general duty on employers to provide and maintain First Aid services, equipment and supplies for employees. We recommend School Authorities review the Code regarding their duty to inform employees of the location of First Aid services and supplies at each school site and facility.

**Contractual Obligations of School Authorities**

As part of their usual business, School Authorities will have contractual obligations flowing from contractual agreements to which they are parties, including the following:

- Employment Contracts
- Collective Agreements
- Mutual Aid Agreements
- Joint Use Agreements
- Community Partnership Agreements
- Transportation Agreements.

A review is recommended of any agreement to which the School Authority is a party to assess if and how the agreement or parts thereof could be amended or brought to an end in the event of an influenza pandemic.

## B. ISSUES UNIQUE TO THE PANDEMIC PLAN PROCESS

As part of the planning process, School Authorities should consider the following issues.

### 1. Labour/Employee

As previously noted, during an influenza pandemic, employee issues are likely to arise. A significant number of staff and students may be absent due to illness, disability, or caring for family members. Staff and students may also be afraid to attend work because of the influenza pandemic.

School Authorities should assess their obligations to pay employees absent from work due to prolonged illness, family responsibilities or school closures. Such matters should be discussed with the planning team, legal counsel, unions, and out of scope representatives.

School Authorities should also review their policies, collective agreements, employment contracts with regard to work attendance, vacation, sick leave, and other types of leaves, including unpaid leaves. School Authorities can also identify policies that apply or may apply in the event of an influenza pandemic. Policies dealing with attendance, leaves, scheduling, and payment to employees for prolonged absences may need to be modified in the event of an emergency. In this regard, a review of the application collective agreement may be initially required by a labour lawyer. A School Authority may also look at their staff/student travel policies and also establish staff/student isolation and evacuation procedures.

Policies currently in place for attendance management, such as requiring physician notes following a certain number of consecutive days of absence due to illness, should also be examined as part of the pandemic planning process. School Authorities should discuss with their health official contacts how they intend to proceed if the health care system becomes overwhelmed with people seeking necessary medical attention and/or requests for medical notes.

School Authorities should examine the issue of transferring staff within the jurisdiction should there be a need reduce teaching staff in some schools during an influenza pandemic.

School Authorities should also consider the steps to take should staff/students begin to demonstrate symptoms of the influenza pandemic disease while at school. Staff and students may also seek counseling services in relation to an influenza pandemic. This aspect may also be considered as part of the planning process.

Again, the plan should provide for significant staff absences and assess whether the School Authority could provide educational services in the event of staff/student absences. The plan should also take into consideration how the School Authority would continue to operate without a full complement of staff.





### 2. Student Safety

School Authorities owe a duty of care to students akin to that of a conscientious parent. Along with the duties owed to staff as an employer, there is a duty owed to the students to maintain their health and safety. Prevention and pandemic preparation measures in school can greatly reduce the threat and spread of a pandemic disease by students.

### 3. Special Education

School Authorities should examine how they will ensure students with special education needs receive instruction during an influenza pandemic. Options such as on-line learning sites, telephone distribution of assignments or media distribution of assignments could be explored in the event of a school closure.

School Authorities should also discuss how it will provide for any physical needs special education students may require at the school sites in the event a full complement of staff does not attend work.

### 4. Infrastructure

A School Authority's current Joint Use Agreements may not cover the influenza pandemic scenario. Agreements should be reviewed to see whether they accord with pandemic planning. School Authorities must also consider that school infrastructure may be required by other local authorities, such as health authorities, during an influenza pandemic. In this scenario, School Authorities would continue to pay for ongoing costs such as utilities, central office costs, and contracted services that were in place prior to the closure. Expenditures directly related to emergency response would be covered through sustainability funding.

School Authorities could also consider if it would be possible to continue to provide educational services from an alternative location and whether staff can work from the alternative location, including from home.

### 5. Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for the actions taken within its School Authority. Boards of Trustees should take an active role in pandemic planning and work closely with the superintendent of schools and central office personnel.

### 6. Central Office

Good leadership brings the necessary people together from the various stakeholders and sets the tone for the School Authority. Other participants also could be identified to assist in the pandemic planning process such as the school resource officer and a school nurse.

The pandemic planning team may be composed of the superintendent and deputy, central office personnel, a school board trustee(s), communication person, legal counsel, facilities director, special education director, and/or school psychologist.

Communication within central office and all the school sites will be vital to a pandemic planning process. Issues such as reporting obligations of individual schools to the central office must be addressed as well as the dissemination of information from central office to the individual schools.

Planning can also take into consideration whether central office staff may have to be redeployed to a school site.

### 7. Administrators

Who will do what, when, and how at each school site? A clear understanding of who is in charge of what function at each school and central office is required as part of the pandemic planning process. A planning team should be established for each school and facility with the inclusion of the principal, assistant principal, school counselor, school assistant, teacher, school security officer, and head custodian. In the time of crisis, the principal will not be able to do everything. Members of the planning team can also be the principal's eyes and ears for the school. They can deal with student and staff needs, parent concerns, calling 911, meeting emergency needs, rumour control, and keeping the principal informed. Someone may also be responsible for providing central office with staff allocation information.

School Authorities may consider discussing these and related issues with their administrators and their ATA local.

### 8. School Sites

School facilities themselves should be evaluated for availability of space, First Aid equipment, and other disease prevention supplies. School sites must also be evaluated for their ability to be converted into make-shift clinics should the health care system be overwhelmed during an influenza pandemic.

School Authorities could also plan for possible closures, isolation, and containment strategies for each school site.

### 9. Unions / Association

Many of the employee issues mentioned above should be planned for in coordination with the local unions. Influenza pandemic issues may be discussed with union officials including a discussion with regard to the collective agreement and changes to policies and procedures in the event of an emergency such as an influenza pandemic.

Other groups, such as bus contractors, should also be consulted regarding pandemic planning.

### 10. School Councils

Communication with the community is also key to pandemic planning and appropriate influenza pandemic response. School councils may be involved in the planning process from the beginning to ensure community issues are included in the pandemic plan.

### 11. Communication

Local media can be an invaluable resource during an influenza pandemic. Information such as the status of the influenza pandemic, school closures, class assignments, school arrangements, and other school-related information can be disseminated through the local media. Approaching local media outlets during the planning stages may allow for a more immediate response should the situation require it.

As seen further in this Guide, School Authorities should determine what type of information might need to be communicated and the most appropriate method of communication. Central office may ensure a system is in place to call staff and ensure principals have current staff and student contact information readily available. Staff and students could also be provided with a central contact number where they may obtain current information on the status of the influenza pandemic and a status report regarding the management by the School Authority of the influenza pandemic within the jurisdiction. In this regard, you may wish to review Schedules “A”, “B”, “F”, and “G” of this Guide.

## C. PROACTIVE STEPS IN PANDEMIC PLANNING

The following important step-by-step actions may be taken by School Authorities before, during, and after an influenza pandemic. As an influenza pandemic can occur in several cycles or waves, this list may need to be repeated.

1.

- a. The first step in an effective planning process is to form a team; designate an individual(s) to oversee, support, or direct the development of the pandemic plan. The planning team could involve members of the School Authority community, the local municipality, regional health authority, emergency services, hospitals, and representatives from local unions and out-of-scope groups.
- b. Create the pandemic plan. The School Authority’s Emergency Plan or Business Continuity Plan may represent the beginning point for action planning. Define terms used in Plan. See the sample document Influenza Pandemic Planning Checklist for School Authorities contained in this Guide.
- c. When developing the pandemic plan, each school within the School Authority may be surveyed to determine the most appropriate and practical response within the means of the School Authority. Financial considerations, time away from educating, security of the facilities, as well as the philosophy of each School Authority, could all play a role in the pandemic planning process. This requires significant knowledge about all aspects of the organization of the School Authority and the specific circumstances of each school.
- d. Work with local health officials and emergency preparedness officials. It is foreseeable they may ask School Authorities to disseminate influenza pandemic information to families. In this regard please see Schedule “H” (Sample Parent Letter #1, Prevention Letter) of this Guide.
- e. Secure details of your Joint Use Agreements and ascertain whether they meet the needs of the School Authority in the event of an influenza pandemic.
- f. Determine essential duties (i.e. Human Resources, OH&S officer, payroll, facilities, maintenance, education, special education, transportation, etc.) and designate key personnel to specific roles. Determine the chain of command within the School Authority, the Board of Trustees, and at each school and facility. It is critical that during this type of emergency situation, School Authorities know what to do so that the staff/students know what to do, including to whom to go for guidance and direction. Decision-makers should then be trained to ensure they are familiar with the pandemic plan. Staff should be advised as to who the decision-makers are



regarding an influenza pandemic as well as the content of the plan.

- g. Determine emergency contact names and numbers within all relevant areas of the School Authority.
- h. Determine if any staff must receive a vaccine in the event of an influenza pandemic and in which order of priority. Identify and involve stakeholders in this part of the planning process.
- i. Clearly identify the pandemic situation that would be considered an “emergency” and trigger the implementation of your pandemic plan.
- j. Consider terms of collective agreement and employment contracts as these relate to the key implications of the pandemic plan including:
  - Sick leave provisions;
  - Shift provisions;
  - Lay off provisions;
  - Remuneration provisions;
  - Ability to transfer employees from one school site to another; and
  - Ability to change, amend, or add to an employee’s work-related duties prior to and during an influenza pandemic.
- k. Develop methods/plans for communicating with the staff, students, families and the media and notification procedures in the event of an influenza pandemic. See Schedule “B” of this Guide: Sample Memo to Staff if a Pandemic is Occurring in Other Parts of the Country.
- l. Determine how your School Authority will train staff, students and volunteers about key pandemic issues. Determine which personnel will have “back up” duties and the training they are to receive.
- m. Obtain necessary response equipment, supplies and materials, and create a maintenance schedule for the same.
- n. Train nurses (if available) and staff in influenza-symptom recognition. An infected person does not show symptoms right away. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable. Educate staff, students, and parents about:
  - The differences between annual/seasonal influenza;
  - H1N1 and influenza pandemic;
  - Best hygienic practices to prevent any sort of influenza or any influenza-like illness; and

- What might occur in a pandemic?
- o. Ensure appropriate disease recognition procedures are in place and implemented; delegate appropriate staff for this responsibility and train appropriately.
- p. Educate students, staff, and school councils on how and why it is important to improve personal hygiene. Use simple non-medical ways to reduce the spread of influenza such as covering one's coughs and sneezes, washing hands, and staying home when ill.
- q. Work with Alberta Health Services from the initial planning stages, including determining whether schools should be cleaned differently or more often if a pandemic occurs.
- r. Decide how and when to encourage or require staff/students to stay home when they are ill. Although this suggestion may be counter-intuitive to employers, each School Authority may have to decide whether it will advise staff/students to stay home if they have symptoms of Influenza Like Illness. You may discuss the legal implications of this aspect with your labour legal counsel, including the requirement of medical documentation.
- s. Review the health needs of students. Some students may have a greater risk of illness. Encourage families to talk to their health care provider about the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 and/or Avian Flu (H5N1). Some parents may need to be more cautious in keeping their children out of school.
- t. Consider alternative learning strategies such as collaborative agreements with public television stations or local cable access stations, teleconferencing, lessons on CDs or online for children with internet access at home. In this regard, see Appendix B: Access to Learning Supports during an Influenza Pandemic.
- u. Once a pandemic plan is drafted, it should not remain a static document. Revising a document as circumstances require will ensure the response is appropriate should a pandemic occur. The plan itself may include a requirement it be reviewed at least annually by the planning team to determine if it needs to be revised or updated in any significant way.

### B. Educating Schools about the Plan

It may be appropriate to educate your schools in regard to pandemic outbreaks. Consider having a health care professional or designated person attend each school to discuss pandemic outbreaks generally and self-care measures that can be undertaken to prevent the spread of disease.

Once a plan is in place, appropriate instruction and training could be provided to staff, students, school councils, and their families to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities and roles during a pandemic. Without this type of information, people may be unable to appropriately respond in a stressful situation.

As previously noted, communication is vital to create an appropriate plan and to ensure appropriate responses in accordance with that plan. Staff and students should be made aware of the plan and clearly

understand their responsibilities in a pandemic. Through community newsletters or other information that is sent home, parents and students should also be informed about the plan and the steps being taken to protect their children.

### C. Emergency Response Drills

To ensure the plan is appropriate in real life situations within the School Authority, emergency response drills may be run during the planning process to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities. Involving other local authorities, such as emergency response personnel, will help ensure a coordinated response.

### D. Recovery: Auditing and Continuous Improvement

Once an emergency response drill has been run, a School Authority may wish to monitor the effectiveness of the plan and correct any shortcomings that may be observed. The plan should become an integral part of each School Authority and not just a document on the shelf. Assessing an emergency response drill or actual emergency events can lead to an even more appropriate response.

The recovery aspect of the plan could address issues such as:

- Rescheduling classes;
- Employee-related matters such as benefit entitlements; and
- Availability of a health care provider to respond to any questions staff and students may have regarding the influenza pandemic.

**D. WHEN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC REACHES CANADA**

1. Begin heightened disease recognition reporting at each school site.
2. Consider sending a communication to the school community. To this end, a sample letter is found at Schedule “J” (Sample Parent Letter #3, Initial Influenza Pandemic Outbreak).
3. Work with the local health authority to issue a press release announcing that schools remain open but parents need to prepare for a pandemic. A sample press release is found at Schedule “M” (Sample Press Release #1).
4. Post influenza prevention signs throughout school sites and administrative offices.
5. Take direction from Alberta Health Services regarding disinfection efforts: should there be normal cleaning routines or enhanced sanitation efforts? Proper cleaning will significantly reduce pathogens on surfaces. If an additional disinfection step is recommended by health officials, staff should be trained in the proper use of disinfectants.
6. Encourage all students and staff to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating. When hand washing is not possible, schools could consider providing hand sanitizing rubs that contain at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can cause skin dryness, irritation or rashes. If used, select a product that contains an emollient or also provide a moisturizing lotion or cream.
7. If hand sanitizer is made available, children should only use it under adult supervision. They should be trained to use it appropriately. Always follow label precautions. The School Authority may wish to discuss this with the health nurse.
8. If room ventilation is poor, alcohol may reach levels in the air that are irritating. This is particularly true when large numbers of individuals are sanitizing their hands at once, if individuals use more of a product than is recommended, and/or if the product is accidentally spilled.
9. Additional cleaning may be carried out throughout the school sites and not targeted to one classroom or site; this will prevent the inadvertent identification of the student with the suspected contagious condition.





**E. WHEN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC REACHES ALBERTA**

1. In the event an influenza pandemic worsens and school closures are necessary, it is recommended you communicate with Workforce Planning (780) 422-4604 at Alberta Education. In the event it becomes necessary to close a school, school closure procedures will have to conform to the School Act and related regulations.
2. If a decision is made to close a school(s), the School Authority will need to communicate effectively with each school’s parent community advising of the situation. A sample document is found at Schedule “K” (Sample Parent Letter #4, School Closure).
3. A sample of some of the key messages to the school community is found at Schedule “P” (Sample Key Messages for School Officials, School Closures) of this Guide.
4. The School Authority may also wish to issue a press release regarding any school closures. See Schedule “N” for a sample Press Release from which you may work (Sample Press Release #2).
5. Review all contracts to which the School Authority is a party and ascertain the legal rights and obligations of the School Authority.

**F. FOLLOW UP**

1. Public Health may issue an advisory regarding the status of the influenza pandemic which leads a School Authority to reopen a school(s).
2. The School Authority may wish to issue the same letter found at Schedule “L” (Sample Parent Letter #5, School Re-Opens).
3. The School Authority may wish to continue communicating with Alberta Health Services to see whether the School Authority is required to return to the heightened disease recognition reporting within the schools.

**G. CHECKLIST**

**INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PLANNING CHECKLIST  
FOR SCHOOL AUTHORITIES**

TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
<b>Activation/Termination of Influenza Pandemic Response Plan</b>			
Determine who has responsibility for activating the Influenza Pandemic Continuity Plan (the “Plan”) for your School Authority and the identity of that person’s back-up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that each school has a process for deciding to activate and/or terminate the Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a communication strategy for reaching staff, service partners, and students as a result of implementing any section of the Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Decision-making and Reporting</b>			
Identify who needs to approve the Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify who is in charge in the event of an influenza pandemic and ensure the roles of the various stakeholders are clearly defined.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify who is responsible for making decisions for each aspect of the Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Agencies and Stakeholder Communications</b>			
Prepare a list of all relevant agencies and stakeholders and their contact information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify who notifies the various stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Communications with Staff and the Public</b>			
Determine who will be in charge of communicating to the staff and the identity of the back-up person(s) to assume this responsibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare site-specific notification for closures and contacts for the public.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
Determine who will be in charge of communicating with the public.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a plan to communicate the reduction/temporary termination of education services to local stakeholders and the public.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine who has the authority to issue announcements/news releases and articulate the identity of a back-up person(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine how quickly these announcements can be produced and approved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure there are alternative arrangements for critical mail delivery if mail service is interrupted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify where to get up-to-date and accurate information about influenza and the pandemic:			
Vaccine and antiviral medications information – identify who has this responsibility and articulate the identity of a back-up person(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infection control – identify who has this responsibility and articulate the identity of a back-up person(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Public health measures:</b>			
Assess readiness to meet communications needs in preparation for an influenza pandemic or other widespread school disruption, including regular review, testing, and updating of communications plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a dissemination plan for communication with staff, students, and families, including lead spokespersons and links to other communication networks (e.g. Alberta Health Services and local municipalities).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advise school staff, students, and families where to find up-to-date and reliable pandemic information from federal, provincial, and local public health sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure language, culture, and reading level appropriateness in communications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
Develop and test protocols (e.g.: hotlines, telephone fan-outs, dedicated websites, local radio or TV stations) for communicating status of school (open, reduced, closed) and recommended actions to school staff, students, and families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop and maintain up-to-date communications contacts of key public health and education stakeholders and use the network to provide regular updates as the influenza pandemic unfolds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assure the provision of communication systems/channels that allow for the expedited transmission and receipt of information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipate the potential fear and anxiety of staff, students, and families as a result of rumors and misinformation and plan communications accordingly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Planning</b>			
Determine who is in charge in the event of an influenza pandemic and whether the roles of the various stakeholders are clearly defined. Who makes what decisions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify who you need input from both internally and externally to prepare and review the Plan for the school:			
School Board Trustees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Superintendent of Schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Labour Legal Counsel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local unions, bargaining agents, and out-of-scope representatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure the Plan is integrated with the emergency preparedness plan(s) of the School Authority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure the school Plan is integrated with your local municipality's emergency and Influenza Pandemic Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
Determine staff capacity and ensure there are provisions to bring in additional staff or volunteers. (Consult with your legal counsel.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the key services that must be provided. (Note: take into account minor to major lack of availability of staff due to illness.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify possible key functions, staff positions, and supplies for each key educational service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the authorities responsible for declaring a public health emergency at the Provincial and local levels and for officially activating the school Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify for all stakeholders the legal authorities responsible for executing the community operational plan, especially those authorities responsible for case identification, isolation, quarantine, movement restriction, healthcare services, emergency care, and mutual aid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As part of the Plan, address influenza pandemic preparedness, involving all relevant stakeholders of the School Authority (e.g., lead emergency response agency, school administrators, local public health representatives, school health and mental health professionals, teachers, food services director, and parent representatives). This committee is accountable for articulating strategic priorities and overseeing the development of the school Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
Work with Alberta Health Services and other community partners to establish organizational structures to manage the execution of the school Plan. Establish a line of authority and common terminology and procedures to be followed in response to an incident.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delineate accountability and responsibility as well as resources for key stakeholders engaged in planning and executing specific components of the Plan. Assure that the plan includes timelines, deliverables, and performance measures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with the Alberta Health Services to address provision of counseling support services for the staff and students during and after a pandemic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider collaborating with the Alberta Health Services to develop a surveillance system that would alert the Alberta Health Services to a substantial increase in absenteeism among staff/students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review and update existing emergency management plans to include a section on an influenza pandemic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review the organizational structure to manage the execution of your Plan. Consider the linkages with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education to coordinate with their pandemic plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participate in exercises of the municipality's pandemic plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incorporate into the Plan requirements of students with special needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
Participate in Public Health pandemic plan exercises, as appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review/exercise your Plan regularly and revise it periodically as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share what you have learned from developing your Plan, as possible, with the community, other partners, and School Authorities to improve community response efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations</b>			
Consider the impact of potential school closures and/or varying levels of student and staff absences related to an influenza pandemic on student learning and extracurricular activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop alternative procedures to ensure continuity of instruction (e.g.: web-based distance instruction, telephone fan-outs, mailed lessons and assignments, instruction via local radio or television stations) in the event of a school closure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a continuity of operations plan for essential central office functions (including payroll, ongoing communication with staff, students, and parents).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Infection Control Policies and Procedures</b>			
Work with the Alberta Health Services to implement effective infection prevention policies and procedures that help limit the spread of influenza (e.g. promotion of hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies, such as soap, alcohol-based/waterless hand hygiene products, tissues, and receptacles for their disposal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish policies and procedures for students and staff sick leave absences unique to an influenza pandemic (e.g., non-culpable).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
Establish sick leave policies for staff and students suspected to be ill or who become ill at school. Decide whether staff and students with known or suspected influenza pandemic should remain at school and should only return after their symptoms resolve and they are physically ready to return to school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish policies for transporting ill staff/students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain a healthy work environment by encouraging healthy behaviors at all times and posting tips on how to stop the spread of germs at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disseminate information from public health sources covering routine infection control (e.g., hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette), influenza pandemic fundamentals (e.g., signs and symptoms of influenza modes of transmission) as well as personal and family protection and response strategies (e.g., guidance for the at-home care of ill students and family members).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide sufficient and accessible supplies (e.g.: soap, waterless antiseptic hand agents, tissues, and receptacles for their disposal).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Plan for the Impact on Your Staff</b>			
Consider and plan for considerable staff absences during an influenza pandemic due to factors such as personal or family members' illness, community containment, measures of quarantines, school and/or business closures, and public transportation disruption.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider staff access to and availability of counseling during a pandemic including School Authority, community, and faith-based resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TASKS	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
Consider programs for student counseling following an influenza pandemic or other wide spread societal disruption.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify key responsibilities and the individuals who work in those areas (i.e. human resources, payroll, and maintenance). The absence of these individuals could impact continuity of services. Build in cross training to ensure that their role can be done in the event of absenteeism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish policies for staff/students that have been exposed to an influenza pandemic, are suspected to be ill, or become ill at school (prompt exclusion of anyone with influenza symptoms). Include policies, based on recommendations from your local health authority, on when a previously ill person is no longer infectious and can return to work/school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare a list of all staff, complete with telephone numbers (home and business) and job titles (including those recently retired).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain a fan-out list to contact employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare a contact list of all staff within the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If public transit becomes a problem, can staff arrange alternate forms of transportation to work, e.g., carpooling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address the issue of staff being unable to report to work due to possible school and daycare closures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a mechanism to monitor increases in staff absenteeism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare an inventory of skills and professional competencies in the event that people from the school are required to perform duties/functions in other areas to maintain essential services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Health and Safety**

- Maintain a copy of the Health and Safety manual on site in your school.
- Address insurance and union issues.
- Prepare an inventory of specialized equipment/facilities that may be needed during an influenza pandemic.
- Address liability issues for volunteers and re-assigned staff.

**Materials and Supplies**

- Develop policies and procedures that cover signing authority.
- Develop a mechanism that will ensure that additional equipment (e.g., cell phones, pagers, refrigerators, etc.) can be obtained with minimum delay.
- Determine who has authority for ordering repair/replacement for equipment and who their alternate is.
- Consider developing a 6-8 week stockpile of critical supplies required to maintain your “must do” services, and stockpile of infection control supplies (e.g., alcohol-based hand sanitizers, tissues).
- Prepare a contact list for all your suppliers and alternate suppliers.
- Consider a recovery phase for items such as depleted supplies or backlogs.

**Documentation and Record Keeping**

- Develop appropriate record keeping procedures for such items as:
  - Complaints and issues raised.
  - Significant decisions that were made.
  - Regular reporting to provincial/federal governments as required.

Determine who has sole access to incoming information (e.g., reports, complaints, etc.) and who their alternates are.

**Information and Technology**

Maintain a central inventory of passwords to office equipment and electronic files.

Ensure that if the information and technology person is ill, there is an alternate.

Ensure the school has access to inventory (including serial numbers) of all computer equipment, printers, fax machines, and photocopiers in case repairs are needed.

Prepare a contact list of all equipment repair persons.

Ensure the school has the staff and equipment for a website/telephone call-in line to update staff and parents.

**Facilities**

Determine if any of the school’s services could be provided from another work location or from home.

Determine if staff could live at the work location or alternative work location for some period of time.

Identify your security contact should there be a problem with physical access to your work location and who their alternate is.

**Procurement of Additional Resources**

Determine who has the responsibility for procurement matters (e.g., ordering resources and/or equipment) during an influenza pandemic.

Determine who will be responsible for payment issues related to overtime and/or additional salary issues and the identity of the alternate.

Determine who has the authority to hire contract/temporary workers and to take on volunteers and the identity of the alternate.

Develop a pre-approval process for purchasing additional supplies.

**Post Pandemic**

What are the immediate lessons learned from the previous wave when planning for multiple pandemic waves?

Who will be responsible for evaluating your response to the pandemic?

What factors should be included in the evaluation?

Who will have the authority to notify the various employees, parents and stakeholders regarding the school's return to full service?

Who will decide to reinstate full service?

**PANDEMIC INFLUENZA: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – A SUPERINTENDENT’S RESOURCE**

**Prevention**

**Q Should students or staff showing symptoms stay home?**

A Students/staff/children who become ill at home with ILI should stay at home until they are symptom free and are feeling well and able to fully participate in all normal day to day school activities (e.g., intra/extramural activities and school trips).

**Q What should we do to prevent the spread of H1N1?**

A To prevent the transmission of infection, schools should:

1. Promote and model basic infection control practices such as respiratory etiquette, and frequent hand cleaning.
  - If ill, stay home from work, school and avoid public places. Seek medical attention if symptoms progress.
  - One of the best ways to prevent influenza is to get the influenza vaccine every year. A vaccine for the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus is expected to be available by November, 2009.
  - Hands should be cleaned before preparing food, eating, touching one’s face and after coughing or sneezing, using the toilet and after handling soiled material.
  - Wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
  - Cough or sneeze into your sleeve rather than your hand.
  - Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth after shaking hands or touching hard surfaces like counters and door handles or other surfaces that may contain influenza and other viruses.
2. Identify and isolate ill students, staff or others quickly.
  - Parents/guardians, staff, volunteers, and students should be provided with basic information on the recognition of Influenza Like Illness (ILI). Parents/guardians, teachers and other staff should monitor the health of their children/students daily or more often for ILI.
  - School staff should be prepared to quickly isolate students/staff who become ill with ILI at school in a room separated from others with adequate supervision until they can go home. Avoid transmission by practicing excellent hand and respiratory etiquette, and maintaining 2 metres distance from the ill individual as much as possible. Masks are not recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada because individuals lack the necessary training in their safe use.
  - Student’s ill with ILI should be sent home with a parent or guardian, not on the school bus. If a bus must be taken, the student should be separated from others and should cover their cough with a tissue or cough/sneeze into their sleeve.
  - Individual’s ill with ILI should stay at home until they are free of symptoms and feeling well, and are able to fully participate in all normal school activities.
  - In school settings where a large proportion of children have underlying medical conditions that put them at high risk for severe illness or complications from pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus, symptomatic children should stay isolated at home for 7 days after onset of symptoms or until all symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer.

- Schools with special needs students who have a tracheotomy, use nebulizers or metered dose inhalers, the same recommendations apply when they become ill with ILI. Isolate the ill student in a separate area and make arrangements for the parent or guardian to take the student home. As these students may be more at risk for complications, they may be advised to seek medical attention depending on the severity of their illness and their pre-existing conditions.
3. Carry out frequent environmental cleaning.
    - Clean high touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, hand rails, faucet handles, computer keyboards, telephones) at least twice daily to prevent transmission of the virus from person to person through contaminated hands.
    - Use regular commercial cleaning products according to product instructions.
    - Provide adequate numbers of garbage receptacles in classrooms and hallways, and empty garbage at least daily.
  4. Monitor for and report outbreaks of respiratory illness.
    - Continue to report school absences of more than 10% to public health using regular communication channels.
    - Public Health will investigate the causative agent, and will advise on control measures as required.

Follow the recommendations of Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW). AHW's booklet, *Influenza Self Care: It's in Your Hands*, on influenza self care and precautions can be found at <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/InfluenzaSelfCare.pdf>

**Q Do we need to wear masks around those who are sick?**

A No, in considering the school setting where people are not typically trained in the proper use of masks and considering the potential risk of infection associated with improper mask use, the use of masks in the school/daycare setting is not recommended.

**Q Do students who have been ill with H1N1 symptoms require a doctor's note before returning to school?**

A No. From a public health perspective, a doctor's note is not required. Students should be symptom free and are feeling well and able to fully participate in all normal day to day school activities.

**Q Will a vaccine be available?**

A An H1N1 vaccine is expected to be ready for release in November, 2009. The Governments of Canada and Alberta have purchased enough to provide it to those who want or need it. Further information on how the vaccine will be provided will be available in the fall.

### **Closures / Cancellations**

**Q Will schools be closed in response to the H1N1 influenza virus?**

A The Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend proactive school closures, even when a confirmed H1N1 case exists. Widespread proactive school closures as a control measure have the potential of coming at high economic and social costs since this would impact the many families that

have one or both parents working outside of the home. This decision is supported by Alberta Education, Alberta Health & Wellness and Alberta Health Services.

Local reactive school closures, however, may occur under the Public Health Act. AHS, in consultation with AHW and school authorities may direct school closures if the health or safety of students and staff is endangered. In making a decision for local closure of schools public health officials and school/child care administrations should take into account considerations such as the impact of school absenteeism and/or staff shortages on safe school or child care operations while balancing these factors against the goal of minimizing social disruption & child safety.

**Q Should field trips or sports events be cancelled?**

A No. From a public health perspective, there is no reason for field trips or sports events to be cancelled at this time. School authorities should contact AHW and AHS for ongoing direction in this regard.

**Q Could class schedules be adjusted to compensate for school closures?**

A In consultation with Alberta Education, school authorities could consider schedule changes to compensate for school closures.

**Q Could diploma and provincial achievement examination schedules be altered because of school closures?**

A Yes. Provincial examination schedules may be altered or suspended due to school closures or if resources are insufficient to administer the examinations. This decision would be made by Alberta Education, in consultation with jurisdiction officials. Alberta Education has processes in place to address events that may impact administration of provincial examinations to students. In the event of a mild to moderate pandemic, exam processes will not change significantly. Provincial examinations will only be cancelled in the event of a severe pandemic.

### Notification

**Q Do schools have a responsibility to report a single H1N1 case to public health or to parents?**

A The protocol around the reporting of H1N1 cases in schools has been changed. Schools will not be notified of individual cases of H1N1 in their students and staff as was initially done in spring 2009. Under a new protocol, whenever there is greater than 10% absenteeism due to illness in the school setting, public health will investigate and recommend preventive measures to the school. Public Health will work with the School Authority to notify the school community and to outline the appropriate preventive measures.

### Funding

**Q Would funding continue if schools were closed or used for other emergency services such as triage centres?**

A Yes. Alberta Education would continue funding to pay for on-going costs such as utilities, central office costs, and contracted services including bus contracts that were in place prior to the closure.



School authorities may be asked to justify expenditures. Those expenditures that are related to emergency response are covered through sustainability funding.

### Preparedness

**Q What is Alberta Education doing to prepare school authorities for a possible pandemic?**

A To provide direct support to school boards regarding pandemic influenza, Alberta Education and the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) are working together to ensure school authorities have support in creating policies and procedures. Alberta Education, in consultation with Alberta Health and Wellness, prepared the Pandemic Planning Guide for Alberta School Authorities to assist school authorities in preparing staff, students, and parents for a crisis situation. Alberta Education has also produced a document entitled H1N1 Communications Toolkit for Schools which is included in the Alberta Education – Back to School Information Kit –2009/2010. This document addresses questions from students, staff and parents regarding the virus and provides general guidelines, administrator and parent information packages and updates from Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness.

**Q Are any Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW) plans in place for a pandemic outbreak?**

A Yes. AHW has produced the Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health System. AHW has also worked with Alberta Municipal Affairs to produce Alberta’s Pandemic Influenza Operations Plan. Links to both plans are included below.

Alberta Pandemic Influenza Operations Plan

[http://aema.alberta.ca/documents/APIOP\\_May\\_13\\_08\\_revised.pdf](http://aema.alberta.ca/documents/APIOP_May_13_08_revised.pdf)

Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health System

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AlbertaPandemicInfluenzaPlanHC.pdf>

**Q Does Alberta Health Services (AHS) have general health emergency plans in place to cope with a pandemic?**

A Yes. AHS has detailed health emergency response plans that address the delivery of health services, including vaccine when available. Please refer to the AHS website for more detailed information. Please check the website <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/> regularly for updates to plans.

**Q What is Alberta Education doing to ensure that student learning will not be greatly impacted by a school closure during a pandemic?**

A Alberta Education has provided several learning supports to ensure students have access to learning.

### **SUPPORT 1 - Digital Resource Support Available**

School Authorities are able to access free distance learning materials digitally through the Tools4Teachers.ca website.

www.tools4teachers.ca - The Tools4Teachers website contains HTML files, PDF files, multimedia objects, video segments, audio clips, and other K -12 resources to download. These items are available to all Alberta teachers and can be used to support children's learning. Work is underway to create a similar tool to be named Tools4Students that can be access through LearnAlberta.ca. Implementation is scheduled to be completed by the end of October, 2009.

### **SUPPORT 2 - Access to Resources:**

Parents can work with children to support their learning using the resources available through government websites and those that may have been provided by the child's teacher, school or School Authority.

www.learnalberta.ca - The LearnAlberta Web site provides access to digital resources to support teaching and learning. Students and parents can enter the site with full access to all resources, using the jurisdiction's username and password. Parents and students can access almost the entire site when entering as a guest.

This website offers curriculum handbooks for parents.  
<http://education.alberta.ca/parents/resources/handbook.aspx>.

<http://education.alberta.ca/francais/parents/resources/handbook.aspx>

These sites offer in-depth curricula information and specify what a student should know and be able to do by the end of each course.

- English programming: <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program.aspx>
- French programming: <http://education.alberta.ca/francais.aspx>

### **SUPPORT 3 - Purchase from the Learning Resources Centre**

Parents can purchase learning resources from the Learning Resources Centre and access information on specialized services for students with visual loss.

- [www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca](http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca) -- The Learning Centre provides a wide array of learning and teaching resources that support the Alberta curriculum and enhance learning in the classroom and at home. Parents can review and purchase learning resources online. This website also has information on the Specialized Services for Students with Visual Impairments (SSVI). For more information contact:

Learning Resources Centre (LRC)  
12360-142 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5L 4X9  
Web site: [www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca](http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca)  
E-mail: [lrccustserv@gov.ab.ca](mailto:lrccustserv@gov.ab.ca)  
Telephone (780) 427-2767; Select Option 1-1 (Toll-free in Alberta  
by first dialing 310-0000)  
Fax (780) 422-9750.

### **SUPPORT 4 – Enrolment in Distributed or Distance Learning**

Parents may be able to register their child to take courses from the Alberta Distance Learning Centre.

Alberta Education develops online distributed learning resources; however, the delivery of these courses is handled by school authorities.

Alternatively, distance learning may be available from distance learning providers such as the Alberta Distance Learning Centre, depending on availability of resources and capacity of the school. Courses may be available in print, online, and blended formats. During a moderate or severe pandemic outbreak, it is anticipated the Alberta Distance Learning Centre will have capacity limitations, so the Centre may choose to respond first to student needs at the grade 12 level.

- Q How should schools manage any Joint Use Agreements sometimes called Memorandums of Agreements (MOU's that exist between school authorities and municipalities?)
- A Alberta Education encourages school authorities, as part of their business Continuity Planning and Pandemic Planning, to review their Joint Use Agreements with municipalities to consider the ramifications that an H1N1 event might have on the provision of services or facilities and to plan and communicate contingency measures that may need to be taken in the event of a spike in H1N1 influenza in the community.

### **Attendance**

- Q How would schools manage if 30% of staff were absent?
- A Staffing assignments would continue to be a decision of each school authority.
- Q If staff members are unable to work because family members are ill with pandemic influenza, will they still receive salary?
- A It is the responsibility of the school authority human resources staff to communicate necessary information to staff.

### **More Information**

- Q Where do we direct parents who are phoning the school / school division for more information?
- A Parents can call Alberta Health Link:

In Edmonton, call 780-408-LINK (5465); in Calgary, call 403-943-LINK (5465). In other parts of Alberta, call Health Link Alberta toll free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

For more information regarding self care, they can visit

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-self-care.html>

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-easy-to-understand.html>

- Q Who should school authorities contact for additional consultation about pandemic planning?
- A School authorities are encouraged to work closely with local Public Health and municipal organizations regarding influenza preparedness planning. For AHS general inquiries please call 780-342-2000 or Alberta toll free at 1-866-408 5465 (LINK)

The Alberta Education contact for matters related to pandemic planning is Andrew Wilson Workforce Planning and Development Branch, and he can be reached at 780-644-7139 or [Andrew.Wilson@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Andrew.Wilson@gov.ab.ca)

Source: Public Health Guidance for Child Care Programs and Schools (K to grade 12) regarding the Prevention and Management of Influenza-Like Illness (ILI), including the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza Virus May 3.

**SCHEDULE “A”**

**SAMPLE MEMO TO STAFF DURING PLANNING PHASE**

This is a draft memo to staff of the School Authority during the influenza pandemic planning phase outlining the current efforts of the School Authority to prepare for a possible influenza pandemic outbreak.

To: All Employees  
From:  
Date:  
Subject: PANDEMIC PLANNING

On a regular basis, we hear about the outbreak of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza and how it is spreading to countries around the world.

School Authority is taking a proactive approach in addressing influenza pandemic issues for schools. This includes the development of a written Influenza Pandemic Action Plan. We are working closely with health officials to share the most up-to-date information as it becomes available. We are coordinating our efforts with other agencies involved in influenza pandemic planning and we will continue to monitor the situation so that we are able to efficiently respond to any changes. We will provide you with periodic updates.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**SCHEDULE “B”**

**SAMPLE MEMO TO STAFF IF PANDEMIC IS OCCURRING IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY**

This is a draft memo a School Authority could send to staff if influenza pandemic cases are occurring in other parts of the country. The memo reinforces risk reduction measures and informs employees of the possibility that a school may have to close if the situation worsens.

To: All employees  
From:  
Date:  
Subject: Influenza pandemic cases in other parts of Canada

Health officials have confirmed that cases of influenza pandemic are now occurring in other parts of the Country. It is critical we all work together to reduce the risk to our students and to ourselves.

Students may come down with influenza pandemic-like symptoms while at school. These include fever of more than 38.6°C, and coughing or sore throat, usually combined with muscle aches. Unlike a cold, influenza symptoms usually occur rapidly. If any student exhibits these symptoms, he/she should immediately be sent to the school office and be isolated from other students.

If you have influenza-like symptoms, you should stay home until you no longer have a fever. If symptoms start while you are at work, please report immediately to your school principal for evaluation. Stay at least three feet away from other people, and cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm. Please practice and reinforce good hygiene procedures to minimize the spread of the influenza virus:

- Encourage students and your colleagues to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating, and do so yourself.
- Remind students to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth, because this practice can transfer the influenza virus from the hands into the body.
- Discourage students from sharing food or utensils. This is especially important because it is possible to spread the influenza virus to others before you have symptoms yourself.

If the situation worsens, there is a possibility that schools may be advised to close for a period of time. We will inform you immediately if a decision is made to close schools.

Thank you for your cooperation in a difficult situation.

**SCHEDULE “C”**

**HELPFUL WEBSITES**

More information

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-H1N1-compare.html>

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-H1N1-questions.html>

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Influenza-H1N1-Quick-Facts.pdf>

Government of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/surveillance-eng.php>

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/index-eng.php>

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/pub-eng.php>

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/index-eng.php>

International

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

<http://www.who.int/en/>

**SCHEDULE “D”**

TELEPHONE HELP LINE

The Alberta Education contact for matters related to pandemic planning is Andrew Wilson, Workforce Planning Branch, and he can be reached at 780-644-7139 or [Andrew.Wilson@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Andrew.Wilson@gov.ab.ca)  
Fax: (780) 415-2481



**SCHEDULE “E”**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Alberta’s Plan for Influenza pandemic:

[http://www.aema.alberta.ca/documents/APIOP\\_May\\_13\\_08\\_revised.pdf](http://www.aema.alberta.ca/documents/APIOP_May_13_08_revised.pdf)

Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health System:

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Alberta-Pandemic-Influenza-Plan-HC.pdf>

Read about influenza self-care

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-self-care.html>

Read “Influenza – What Can You Do?”

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-easy-to-understand.html>

**Booklet**

- Influenza Self-Care: It's in your hands

**Fact Sheets**

- Hand washing to prevent Influenza
- How to take a temperature - children and adults
- Over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications for Influenza
- Influenza antiviral medications
- Dealing with stress or feelings of fear because of Influenza
- Influenza pandemic

For more information:

Health Link Alberta

Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)

Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)

Outside Edmonton and Calgary local calling areas, call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

## **SCHEDULE “F”**

### **MEDIA TIPS**

#### Media Planning tips:

- Pick one person to deal with the media, preferably someone who knows a lot about the school or School Authority and can answer questions.
- Have the Influenza Pandemic Plan in place and make sure staff knows what information is appropriate to release.
- Create a master media list with telephone/fax numbers and contacts. Add to this list as other media call.
- Create a list of PR experts to call for help.
- Use technology. Establish an e-mail group for updates to staff, board members, and media. List news updates on Web sites.
- Have media kits on hand, including School Authority facts, names of school board trustees, central office personnel and administrators, school floor plans, and community description. Include a clear statement explaining the School Authority’s policy on access to staff and student information and facilities and make sure staff understands the policy.

#### When reporters are coming:

- Create a central communication post for news briefings and assign a spokesperson.
- Anticipate reporters needing to use Telephones workspace, electrical outlets. Don’t forget about restrooms.
- Plan regular briefings and announce them as far in advance as possible. Ask reporters to refrain from questions until all designated speakers have released statements.
- Assign one Telephone number, releasing it to the media to publish and broadcast.
- Effective media relations are just one part of the School Authority’s over-all communication plan during an influenza pandemic.

#### Communications:

- How will staff, students, parents, and the community be kept informed? Who will deal with the news media? The School Authority should communicate as quickly as possible to staff, students, and parents. Develop a way of informing all schools within the jurisdiction.
- Plans need to first focus on managing – ensuring the safety of students and staff, protecting school property, and restoring normal educational processes as quickly as possible. Also focus

on communicating – before, during, and after an influenza pandemic. Build in flexibility. Things don't always go as planned.

- A primary goal is keeping the public informed about the pandemic while maintaining student and staff privacy.
- As soon as possible, provide the communication person with a concise statement of the facts so information can be released. The statement should be based on what you can confirm at the present time. Never speculate. It's wise to have one spokesperson work with the media.
- If an influenza pandemic hits, a sound plan can guide a School Authority through the process with sensitivity, credibility, and dignity.

## **SCHEDULE “G”**

### **THE FIRST THIRTY MINUTES OF A CRISIS**

What is done in the first 30 minutes of a crisis is crucial in controlling rumors and determining people’s perceptions of the crisis and how it was handled.

- The crisis team leader should take charge.
- Gather the facts.
- Define the problems.
- Consider options. Act to ensure the safety of staff and students.
- Communicate with staff and students.
- Brief the news media.
- Prepare for telephone calls and volunteers (for major disasters.)
- Decide the best way to communicate with parents
- Demonstrate competence.
- Make sure information provided is accurate and reliable.

**SCHEDULE “H”**

Sample Letter for Parents – Influenza-like-illness outbreaks

(this sample letter is intended for school principals to use to notify parents under the direction of Public Health when there is an ILI outbreak at the school)

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Our school has recently experienced an increase in numbers of students/staff ill with influenza-like illness (ILI). We have notified and are working with Alberta Health Services, Public Health to further investigate and implement measures to limit transmission of illness.

This increased illness may be due to seasonal or pandemic H1N1 influenza, or other respiratory viruses. The recommended control measures are effective for any respiratory viruses.

As recommended by Public Health, the school is:

- Promoting and reminding students and staff of basic infection control practices such as respiratory etiquette, and frequent hand cleaning.
- Notifying parents if students become ill with ILI at school. Ill students will be kept separated from others until picked up by parents.
- Advising ill staff to stay home.
- Carrying out frequent environmental cleaning including high touch surfaces.
- Monitoring student and staff absentee rates due to illness.

We ask parents to keep ill children at home until they are free of symptoms and feeling well, and are able to fully participate in all normal daily activities. Encourage and remind your children to use respiratory hygiene (i.e. cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough and sneeze into their sleeve, dispose used tissue and wash hands afterwards using soap and water).

For more information on Pandemic (H1N1) 2009, refer to the following websites:

<http://education.alberta.ca/>

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/>

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>

## SCHEDULE “F”

### SAMPLE PARENT LETTER #3 (INITIAL INFLUENZA PANDEMIC OUTBREAK)

Draft letter to let parents know schools are open

Dear Parents,

This letter will give you information about the influenza outbreak in Alberta. Every year, some people get sick with the influenza during the fall and winter months. This year, there is a new influenza virus that is making people in Alberta sick. Many students and teachers in our school are sick with the influenza. We hope they will all get better quickly.

At this time, the Alberta Health Services tells us 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 influenza from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home.

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 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.
- 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 or other places where there are large groups of people.

If you have questions, please contact your healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT TELEPHONE NUMBER). You can get more information from (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY). Visit online at <http://www.xxx> or call the XX Emergency Information line at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

If the influenza pandemic continues to spread and more students become ill, schools may close for a few 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. We suggest you begin planning now for childcare in your home.

**SCHEDULE “J”**

**SAMPLE PARENT LETTER #4 (School Closure)**

Draft letter to inform parents schools are closed

Dear Parents,

The School Authority has been ordered to close all schools within its jurisdiction. This order is because of the influenza pandemic situation in \_\_\_\_\_, Alberta. 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 influenza. As soon as we learn when we can reopen the school, we will let you know.

We appreciate that many students and their families are sick. We understand this is a difficult time for our community and we wish those who are ill a speedy recovery.

Because the influenza 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.

For more information, call your healthcare provider or visit (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY) website at <http://www.xxx> or call the XX Emergency Information line at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. [Need to confirm just prior to publication that the number is 1-888-959-9911]

Again, we will contact you as soon as we have information about when school can reopen.

**SCHEDULE “K”**

**SAMPLE PARENT LETTER #5 (School Re-Opens)**

Draft letter to inform parents schools are re-opened.

Dear Parents,

Public Health officials have declared the influenza pandemic is under control. Our school will open again on \_\_\_\_\_ (ADD DATE). At this time, students may safely return to class.

Even though school is opening, there are still some people who are sick from the influenza virus. Health officials say that influenza pandemic 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. If this were to be the case, we would communicate with you.

Because the influenza 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 on \_\_\_\_\_ (ADD DATE) at the regular start time at school.



**SCHEDULE “L”**

**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #1**

School Authorities may work from this draft press release to announce schools remain open.

For release (DATE)

Contact: (name and number)

School Authority (name) schools are open but parents should prepare

Our School Authority schools remain open despite the influenza pandemic outbreak in Alberta. However, parents are asked to prepare for possible closures if the virus continues to spread.

We are working together with health officials 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 influenza pandemic continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials say they may need to order schools closed 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 influenza pandemic as they would colds and other influenza 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 avoid proximity with people who are sick, and stay home from work or school if you are sick.

Our recommendations may change during the course of an influenza pandemic outbreak. For school updates, parents can call the School Authority hotline at (INSERT NUMBER) or the (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY) Emergency Information Line at: (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

For more information on influenza pandemic, visit (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY) website at <http://www.xxx> or the federal government website at [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemic\\_qa\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemic_qa_e.html).

**SCHEDULE “M”**

**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE 2**

School Authorities may work from this draft press release to announce school closures. A similar press release may be issued when school re-opens.

For immediate release (DATE)

Contact: (name and number)

Order of closure of schools in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ has ordered the closure of schools as a result of the influenza pandemic outbreak in \_\_\_\_\_.

Schools may be closed for a period of time – several days or even weeks. Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, Alberta Health Authorities have also ordered other educational institutions to close. Because it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather, health officials warn people to stay away from shopping malls, community centres and other places where germs can be spread.

"We know this is an anxious time for our community and our thoughts are with 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 ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES, the purpose of closing schools is to decrease the risk of staff and students getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.

More information on influenza pandemic is available on (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY) website at <http://www.xxx> or call the XX Emergency Information line at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

**SCHEDULE “N”**

**SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS  
(IN THE EVENT OF A PANDEMIC OUTBREAK)**

We know this is an anxious time for our community and we are concerned about 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 PUBLIC HEALTH, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open.

If the influenza pandemic 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 \_\_\_\_\_ weeks).

The purpose of closing schools will be to decrease contact among staff and 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.

Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of influenza pandemic as they would colds and other influenza 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 avoid proximity with people who are sick, and stay home from work or school if you are sick.

Recommendations may change during the course of the influenza pandemic. We will make public announcements through the internet, newsletters, and media, and parents can call the School Authority's hotline at (INSERT HOTLINE).

For more information on influenza pandemic and prevention, visit the website of (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY) at <http://www.xxx>.

**SCHEDULE “O”**

**SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS  
(SCHOOL CLOSURES)**

Schools have been ordered closed in \_\_\_\_\_, Alberta, effective \_\_\_\_\_ as a result of the influenza pandemic outbreak in our county.

Schools may be closed for an extended period of time (for example, up to \_\_\_\_ weeks).

We know this is a difficult time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information.

Because influenza pandemic is easily spread from person-to-person, it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather and children should stay home. The purpose of closing schools is to decrease contact among staff and children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.

During this time, children and adults should stay away from other people and groups, as much as possible. Health officials also advise people should not gather in other locations such as homes, shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of influenza pandemic as they would colds and other influenza 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 at least three feet from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.

Recommendations may change during the course of the influenza pandemic. We will make public announcements through the media and parents can call the School Authority's hotline at (INSERT NUMBER)

For more information on influenza pandemic and prevention, visit the website of (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY) at <http://www.xxx>.