



## CATHOLIC INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF THE NELSON DIOCESE

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Policy: Pandemic Response Plan  
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## **What is a Pandemic?**

- A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak due to the spread of a new virus.
- Pandemics can happen when an animal virus mixes or changes to result in a new virus.
- This new virus is capable of person-to person spread because most people have little or no immunity to it.
- Influenza causes outbreaks each winter. The very young and the very old usually have the more severe illness.
- Influenza pandemics cause more illness and more serious outcomes like hospitalization and death affecting all age groups, including young adults. This is different from usual influenza.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has determined the H1N1 virus is a pandemic, based on the WHO's pandemic definition. At this time, WHO considers the overall severity of the influenza pandemic to be moderate. Based on experience from the Southern Hemisphere, Interior Health expects the spread of H1N1 to increase rapidly during the fall, 2009. Contingency planning is essential for an effective response.

## **Communication**

The Regional Medical Health Officer is the spokesperson for all pandemic health issues. The Superintendent of Schools (or designate) is the spokesperson for all CISND related pandemic issues during a pandemic. Patient health information is confidential and is to be maintained while ensuring that the response to potential risk is adequate.

## **School Closure Decision Making Process**

The Provincial Medical Health Officer will direct the province when it is time to activate pandemic plans. If, to minimize the spread of infection, activation of these plans is to include school closures, the Regional Medical Health Officer will advise the Superintendent of Schools.

## **Separating ill Students and Staff**

Sick students and staff should always be required to stay home. Students and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the day must be promptly separated from other students and staff and sent home.

Schools should regularly update contact information for parents so that they can be contacted more easily if they need to pick up their ill child.

### **What are the Signs and Symptoms of H1N1?**

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Chills and Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle aches and pains
- May include diarrhea and vomiting (especially in children)
- Shortness of breath
- Lack of appetite

1. **Pre-pandemic Period:** This is the critical stage for pandemic preparedness. The pre-pandemic phase is NOW, and planning efforts need to focus on education, business continuity and infection control.

**What types of prevention and surveillance measures are CISND currently employing?**

- Educating about proper hand washing
- Educating about proper cough/sneeze etiquette
- Installing more soap dispensers
- Installing hand sanitizers
- Increasing contact surface disinfection
- Providing tissues (Kleenex) for student and staff use
- Informing parents, through newsletter, about H1N1 and internet links where parents can keep informed through updates from BC Health
- Advising parents to keep children home when they are ill
- Calling parents to pick up students that become ill throughout the school day
- Communicating with Regional Health Officers when absentee rates are over 10%
- Advising staff to stay home if they are ill

2. **Pandemic Period:**

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) will declare when it is time to activate plans for the pandemic phase. We cannot anticipate exactly what will happen. Plans will need to be adapted to reflect circumstances and situations as they arise.

During this phase, the key goals will be to:

- Minimize rates of mortality, morbidity, illness, and suffering; and,
- Minimize educational and business disruptions.

**CISND Planned Response During a Pandemic Period**

- If school trips are planned, determine how children will be isolated and sent home should they become ill with flu like symptoms
- Closing of schools may be required in consultation with PHO & MHO
- School trips and school evening user groups may be cancelled.
- Schools may be used by officials for clinics, hospitals, daycare centres, etc.
- Depending on staffing or student shortages, classes may need to be combined
- Bus routes may need to be combined due to driver and/or student shortages
- Continued use of infection control practices and procedures that help limit the spread of infection
- Ensure that schools and facilities have an adequate supply of hand soap and paper towels
- Advise staff and students that are sick with flu like symptoms to remain at home
- Restriction of community, volunteer and visitors to schools and facilities
- Rigorous cleaning of schools and contact surfaces
- Ongoing education for children and staff on proper hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette
- Advise the school public health nurse when **greater than 10%** of school population is away ill
- Separation of ill students and staff until they can be sent home
- Continue to work closely with MHO, Child Youth Program consultants, Ministry of Education, and City Officials
- Continue to provide Catholic Independent Schools and School Administrators with information on influenza surveillance and preventative measures
- If school is open, provide information in school newsletter; if school is closed, implement plan for continuation of learning
- Schools maintain plan for communicating immediate information regarding school closure

### **3. Post-Pandemic Period:**

The post-pandemic period begins when the Provincial Health Officer declares that the influenza pandemic is over. The primary focus of work at this time is to restore normal services, deactivate pandemic response activities, review their impact, and use the lessons learned to guide future planning activities.

#### **Post-Pandemic Activities**

- Depending on staffing shortages, classes may need to be combined
- Plan for bus driver shortages and combining routes
- Resumption of school classes and activities
- Continue with infection control practices and procedures that help limit the spread of infection
- Ensure that schools and facilities have an adequate supply of hand soap and paper towels
- Advise staff and students that are sick with flu like symptoms to remain at home
- Ongoing education for children and staff on proper hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette
- Advise the school public health nurse when greater than 10% of the school population is away ill
- Separate ill students and staff

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

##### Superintendent of Schools

1. CISND Pandemic Plan Leader
2. Direct school closures
3. Key spokesperson for school related pandemic issues

##### Principals

1. Educate all staff and students about proper hand washing practices.
2. Educate all staff and students about cough/sneeze etiquette.
3. Ensure that staff and students do not attend work or school when exhibiting flu like symptoms
4. Separate students that become ill at school until they can be sent home
5. Discuss pandemic planning at monthly safety committee meetings.
6. Advise school councils and parents about CISND plans for pandemic influenza
7. If greater than 10% of the school population is away, report to the School Public Health Nurse and to the Superintendent.
8. Ensure that rigorous cleaning and infection control practices are happening in the schools and facilities
9. Ensure that parents/guardians have provided up-to-date contact information to the school.
10. Ensure an emergency contact tree has been set up for staff members.
11. Plan for a disruption in the school bussing system.
12. Plan for a disruption in the school janitorial services.
13. Work with staff to create a plan for continuation of learning, to be implemented in the event of school closure.