

Appendix 7 - Pandemic Influenza Community Mitigation Interim Planning Guide for Colleges and Universities

Purpose

This Interim Planning Guide for Colleges and Universities is provided as a supplement to the *Interim Pre-Pandemic Planning Guidance: Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States—Early, Targeted, Layered Use of Nonpharmaceutical Interventions*. The guide is intended to assist in pre-pandemic planning. Individuals and families, employers, schools, and other organizations will be asked to take certain steps (described below) to help limit the spread of a pandemic, mitigate disease and death, lessen the impact on the economy, and maintain societal functioning. This guidance is based upon the best available current data and will be updated as new information becomes available. During the planning process, Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial officials should review the laws, regulations, and policies that relate to these recommendations, and they should include stakeholders in the planning process and resolution of issues.

Colleges and universities will be essential partners in protecting the public's health and safety when an influenza pandemic occurs. This *Pandemic Influenza Community Mitigation Interim Planning Guide for Colleges and Universities* provides guidance to post-secondary institutions, describing how they should prepare for an influenza pandemic. At the onset of an influenza pandemic, public health officials will determine the severity of the pandemic and recommend actions to protect the community's health. People who become severely ill may need to be cared for in a hospital. However, most people with influenza will be safely cared for at home.

Community mitigation recommendations will be based on the severity of the pandemic and may include the following:

- Asking ill people to voluntarily remain at home and not go to work or out in the community for about 7–10 days or until they are well and can no longer spread the infection to others (ill individuals will be treated with influenza antiviral medications, as appropriate, if these medications are effective and available).
- Asking members of households with a person who is ill to voluntarily remain at home for about 7 days (household members may be provided with antiviral medications, if these medications are effective and sufficient in quantity and feasible mechanisms for their distribution have been developed).
- Dismissing students from schools (including public and private schools as well as colleges and universities) and school-based activities and closure of childcare programs for up to 12 weeks, coupled with protecting children and teenagers through social distancing in the community to include reductions of out-of-school social contacts and community mixing. Childcare programs discussed in this guidance include centers or facilities that provide care to any number of children in a nonresidential setting, large family childcare homes that provide care for seven or more children in the home of the provider and small family childcare homes that provide care to six or fewer children in the home of the provider.¹

- Recommending social distancing of adults in the community, which may include cancellation of large public gatherings; changing workplace environments and schedules to decrease social density and preserve a healthy workplace to the greatest extent possible without disrupting essential services; and ensuring work-leave policies to align incentives and facilitate adherence with the measures outlined above.

Recommendations for cancelling college and university classes will depend upon the severity of the pandemic. The current three-tiered planning approach includes 1) no dismissals in a Category 1 pandemic, 2) short-term (up to 4 weeks) dismissal from classes in a Category 2 or Category 3 pandemic, and 3) prolonged (up to 12 weeks) dismissal from classes in a severe influenza pandemic (Category 4 or Category 5).

Dismissing students for up to 12 weeks will have educational implications. Planning now for a prolonged period of student dismissal will help colleges and universities to plan for alternate ways to provide continued instruction and services for students and staff. Even if students are dismissed from classes, the college/university facility may remain open during a pandemic and may continue to provide services to students who must remain on campus and provide lessons and other services to off-campus students via Internet or other technologies. Some students, particularly international students, may not be able to rapidly relocate during a pandemic and may need to remain on campus for some period. They would continue to need essential services from the college/university during that time.

Continued instruction is not only important for maintaining learning but also serves as a strategy to reduce boredom and engage students in a constructive activity while group classes are cancelled. Planning now for a severe pandemic will help assure that your college or university is prepared to implement these community recommendations. These preparedness efforts will be beneficial to your school, staff, students, and the community, regardless of the severity of the pandemic. Be prepared to activate the university's crisis management plan for pandemic influenza, which links the university's incident command system with the local and/or State health department/emergency management system's incident command system(s).

The *Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Colleges and Universities* describes approaches to school planning for a pandemic and can be found at www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/index.html and www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/planning-guide/index.html.

Recommendations for implementation of pandemic mitigation strategies are available at www.pandemicflu.gov and reliable, accurate, and timely information on the status and severity of a pandemic will also be posted on this site. Additional information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636). This line is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY: 1-888-232-6348. Questions can be e-mailed to cdcinfo@cdc.gov.

Recommendations for Planning

1. Plan for ill individuals to remain at home

- Develop a plan for faculty and staff absences due to personal illness. Plan for alternative staffing.
 - - Identify critical job functions and plan for alternate coverage of those functions during a pandemic.
 - Review and analyze Federal and State employment laws that identify employer obligations and options for personnel.
- Establish and clearly communicate policies on sick leave and employee compensation.
- Encourage ill persons to stay home during a pandemic and establish return-to-work policies after illness.
- Establish policies for sick-leave absences unique to a pandemic (e.g., liberal/unscheduled leave).
- Develop policies on observation for illness and what to do when a student or staff member becomes ill at the college/university.
- Advise employees to look for information on taking care of ill people at home. Such information will be posted on www.pandemicflu.gov.

2. Plan for all household members of a person who is ill to voluntarily remain at home

- Develop a plan for faculty and staff absences related to family member illness. Plan for alternate staffing.
 - - Identify critical job functions and plan now for coverage of those functions.
 - Establish policies for alternate or flexible worksite (e.g., videoconferencing and teleworking) and flexible work hours.
 - Review Federal and State employment laws that identify your employer obligations and options for employees.
- Establish and clearly communicate policies on family leave and employee compensation.
- Establish policies for sick-leave absences unique to a pandemic (e.g., liberal/unscheduled leave).
- Establish policies for employees who have to stay home because someone in their household is ill with pandemic influenza.
- Be familiar with Federal and State laws regarding leave of workers who need to care for an ill family member or voluntarily remain at home.
- Advise employees to look for information on taking care of ill people at home. Such information will be posted on www.pandemicflu.gov.

3. Plan for dismissal of students and childcare closure for employees

- Identify and plan for employees and staff who may have to stay home if schools and childcare programs dismiss students/children during a severe pandemic.
- Plan for alternate staffing based on your assessment.
 - - Identify critical job functions and plan for coverage of those functions in case of prolonged absenteeism during a pandemic.
 - Establish flexible work policies for employees, such as flexible work hours and schedules (e.g., staggered shifts) to accommodate childcare needs.
- Encourage your employees who have children to make their own plans to care for children if officials recommend dismissal of students from schools and closure of childcare programs. Advise that employees plan for an extended period (up to 12 weeks) in case the pandemic is severe. Instruct employees not to bring their children to the workplace if childcare cannot be arranged.
- In a severe pandemic, parents will be advised to protect their children by reducing out-of-school social contacts and mixing with other children. Although limiting all outside contact may not be feasible, families may be able to develop support systems with co-workers,

friends, families, or neighbors, if they continue to need childcare. For example, they could prepare a plan in which two to three families work together to supervise and provide care for a small group of infants and young children while their parents are at work (studies suggest that childcare group size of less than six children may be associated with fewer respiratory infections).²

- Determine if schools must, may, or cannot compensate, continue benefits to and extend leave to employees who are not working during the pandemic. Inform employees of the decision.
- Coordinate with State and local government and faith-based and community-based organizations to provide any needed assistance to staff that are not able to work for a prolonged period (including matching available workers with local businesses, government agencies, or non-profit organizations needing extra workers).

4. Plan for dismissal of students

- Inform students about plans and procedures for providing and completing course work.
- Provide guidance to students and faculty on continuing student instruction. Such guidance may include
 - - Assessing the possibility of altering course-work requirements.
 - Providing ongoing assignments by regular mail, e-mail, Internet links, telephone, teleconferencing, or calling into a recorded message at the university
 - Gathering information in advance that would identify students' mailing addresses, telephone/cell numbers, and e-mail addresses
 - - Encouraging faculty who teach the same subject to share in the development of distance-learning instructional materials for their students.
 - Providing information on accessing university healthcare staff (e.g., nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, physician assistants, counselors, and psychologists) who could be recommended as consultation resources for students with physical and mental/emotional healthcare needs.
 - Develop a plan for accommodating students, especially international students, who remain on campus during an influenza pandemic.
 - Review and implement guidance from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on appropriate work practices and precautions to protect employees from occupational exposure to influenza virus during a pandemic. Risks of occupational exposure to influenza virus depends in part on whether or not jobs require close proximity to people who may be infectious with the pandemic influenza virus or whether employees are required to have either repeated or extended contact with the public. OSHA will post and periodically update such guidance on www.pandemicflu.gov.

5. Plan for workplace and community social distancing measures

- Learn about social distancing methods that may be used during a pandemic to limit person-to-person contact during a pandemic and reduce the spread of disease (e.g., reducing hand-shaking, limiting face-to-face meetings and shared workstations, work from home policies, staggered shifts).
- Use social distancing measures to minimize close contact at your college/university. Determine how your facility could be rearranged to allow more distance between people during a pandemic.
- Develop plans for alternatives to mass gatherings. Examples could range, for example, from video messages on the Internet to e-mailed messages, mailed newsletters, pre-recorded messages on a designated call-in phone number.
- Encourage good hygiene at the workplace. Provide faculty, staff, and students with information about the importance of hand hygiene (information can be found at www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/) as well as convenient access to soap and water and alcohol-based

hand gel in your facility. Educate faculty, staff, and students about covering their cough to prevent the spread of germs (see www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm).

6. Communicate with faculty, staff, students, and parents/families

- Provide faculty, staff, and parents with information on the college/university's pandemic preparedness plan in advance of a pandemic. This communication should include
 - - Identifying expected roles/actions for faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders during implementation
 - Assuring that essential central office functions, including payroll, and communications with staff, students and families will continue
 - Identifying how the college/university's physical facilities may be used for other purposes during a pandemic
- Develop a plan to inform parents/families that students may be dismissed during a Category 4-5 pandemic.
 - - Encourage them to plan for that contingency, including plans for relocating students to home or elsewhere
 - Inform them of school procedures and policies regarding tuition, fees, and contractual obligations
- Provide systematic emergency communications to faculty, staff, and students (both on and off campus) during the pandemic by using multiple methods (e.g., a telephone calling tree, an e-mail alert, or call-in voice recording) to communicate pandemic status in the community and status of classes and other university activities.
- Be prepared to provide parents/families with information discussing
 - - How dismissal of students will be announced
 - Why students will be dismissed from classes and the importance of keeping students from congregating with others in the community
 - How alternate instruction will be provided
- Be prepared to provide students who soon will be leaving for home with information discussing
 - - Why students are being dismissed from classes and the importance of keeping students from congregating with other students in the community. Students should understand
 - - Differences between seasonal and pandemic influenza
 - How influenza is spread
 - What individuals can do help prevent the spread of influenza
- Remind students who live in residence halls to take their books and other personal items with them on the last day of classes, if indicated.
- Provide information to university faculty, staff, and parents/families on what they can do to prepare their families for the pandemic. Resources are available at www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/checklist.html and www.ready.gov/america/index.html.
- Recommend that faculty, staff, students and their families seek further information about the pandemic through resources, including key Federal, State, and local public health that provide regular updates on the status of the pandemic. For reliable, accurate, and timely information about pandemic flu, see www.pandemicflu.gov.

7. Help your community

- Coordinate your pandemic plans and actions with local health planning.

- Find volunteers in your college/university who want to help people in need, such as elderly neighbors, single parents of small children, or people without the resources to get the medical or other help they will need.
- Think of ways your institution can reach out to others in your community to help them plan for a pandemic.
- Participate in community-wide exercises to enhance pandemic preparedness.

8. Recovery

- Establish with State and local planning teams the criteria and procedures for resuming school activities.
- Develop communication for advising employees and students and families of the resumption of school programs and activities.
- Develop the procedures, activities, and services needed to restore the learning environment.

References:

1 American Academy of Pediatrics. Children in Out-of-Home Child Care: Classification of Care Service. In: Pickering LK, ed. Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:124.

2 Bradley RH. Child care and common communicable illnesses in children aged 37 to 54 months. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 2003 Feb;157(2):196-200.