

RENFREW COUNTY & DISTRICT PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLAN

A Planning Guide for Community Agencies

October, 2006

**Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health – Toronto Pandemic
Influenza Plan, June 6, 2006**

Pandemic Influenza Information for Community Agencies

Historically, influenza pandemics have occurred approximately every 35 – 40 years. Some pandemics have caused only mild illness in people, while others have caused serious illness, death and social disruption. Although there is no way to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be, planning and preparedness is the best way to help reduce the impact of a pandemic or any other emergency.

What is influenza?

Influenza, or “the flu,” is a common and highly contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. It is transmitted from person to person by coughing, sneezing or direct contact. The influenza season is usually October to April. The best protection against seasonal influenza is to get vaccinated every fall. As the influenza virus changes, a new vaccine must be developed every year based on current and emerging viral strains. Vaccination protects individuals against the seasonal strains of the flu virus.

What is pandemic influenza?

The virus that causes the flu is constantly changing. A pandemic may start when three conditions are met:

- 1) a completely new strain of flu virus emerges that is different from the common strains of the flu that have been circulating;
- 2) the virus spreads easily from person to person; and
- 3) the virus has the ability to cause serious illness in people.

What is avian influenza (bird flu)?

Avian influenza or “bird flu” is a contagious disease that normally infects birds and sometimes pigs. Avian influenza viruses have on rare occasions mutated to infect humans. The H5N1 virus that is currently circulating in Asia and parts of Europe has infected a small number of people who have been in close contact with infected birds. Although it can cause serious illness in people, at this time it does not transmit easily between people. Governments and international organizations worldwide are monitoring the situation.

How will Renfrew County & District be affected by pandemic influenza?

Previous influenza pandemics have occurred in two to three waves over several months or years, with each wave lasting six to eight weeks. In a severe pandemic flu situation, most people will be affected in some way. Supplies of goods and services could be disrupted, hospitals could be overwhelmed and the psychological impact on the public may be significant. In the worst case, important community services may need to be curtailed, consolidated, or suspended because of absenteeism in the workplace and to prevent the spread of infection.

The following chart provides estimates on the number of people that may be directly impacted by a pandemic in Renfrew County & District. However, when an actual pandemic begins, the specific impact may be different. Some past pandemics have been mild, resulting in only a modest increase in the annual number of flu cases. The exact nature of the pandemic virus cannot be known until the new strain emerges.

Estimated Direct Health Impact of an Influenza Pandemic on Renfrew County & District

Description	Based on 15% attack rate	Based on 35% attack rate
Clinically ill	15,000	35,000
Require outpatient care	6,300	26,949
Require hospitalization	70	558
Deaths	28	172

Based on FLUAID 2.0 – A CDC software designed to provide a range of estimates of the impact of pandemic influenza available at www.gov.flu/tools/fluaid/ and Renfrew County & District population estimate of 100,545 based on the 2001 Census data.

Pandemic Influenza - Roles and Responsibilities

Pandemic planning and preparedness activities are under way around the globe. Numerous agencies and governments have already developed their plans, including all three levels of government in Canada. The following outlines government roles and responsibilities.

International - World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the United Nations specialized agency for health. The WHO conducts world-wide monitoring and reporting of diseases. The WHO will declare the beginning of a pandemic; co-ordinate global response based on the various stages of a pandemic and provide recommendations on the management of a pandemic.

Federal – Public Health Agency of Canada

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is responsible for coordinating the nation-wide health response to pandemic influenza, and works with international organizations such as WHO to support surveillance, coordination and investigation activities. The Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan (CPIP) details the federal government actions and expectations for the provinces and territories. PHAC will declare the beginning of a pandemic in Canada.

Provincial - Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is responsible for coordinating the province-wide response to pandemic influenza, including the declaration of a provincial emergency. The MOHLTC will declare the beginning of a pandemic in Ontario.

Municipal – Renfrew County & District Health Unit

Renfrew County & District Health Unit (RCDHU) takes the lead in pandemic influenza preparedness for Renfrew County & District. Specific RCDHU roles during a pandemic influenza emergency response include:

- Disease surveillance and reporting
- Investigating cases and follow-up of close contacts
- Health risk assessment and communications, including infection control advice
- Liaison with hospitals and other agencies
- Community-based disease control strategies
- Vaccine and antiviral medication distribution and administration

The Medical Officer of Health, in consultation with Head of Council for the 17 municipalities, City of Pembroke and South Algonquin, is responsible for declaring an emergency in Renfrew County & District. The role of RCDHU is described in more detail in the Renfrew County & District Pandemic Influenza Plan at www.rcdhu.com. For more information, call the Health Info Line at 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 ext. 666.

Introduction to Pandemic Influenza Preparedness for Community Agencies

Community agencies need to prepare for pandemic influenza to reduce the impact on your operations, ensure continuation of your services wherever possible, and prepare for possible disruptions during a pandemic. The following information should assist you with planning and preparedness for any emergency.

Working Together

Renfrew County & District Health Unit (RCDHU), in collaboration with the provincial and federal governments, will keep the public informed before, during and after a pandemic by providing timely, clear and up-to-date information. This will be done as necessary through the media, RCDHU web site and our Health Info Line. All governments, the private sector and the community must work together to ensure that essential services (e.g. access to food, water, hydro) continue to be available. In addition, the needs of the most vulnerable members of the community must be addressed. Municipalities are developing plans to keep key municipal services operating during a pandemic. Decisions regarding any closure of schools, day nurseries, and cancellation of social gatherings will be made by RCDHU, in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, neighbouring jurisdictions and directly affected agencies.

Things to Think About for Your Agency

Community agencies play an important role in providing supports and resources. While we recognize that many agencies do not have the resources to develop your own pandemic influenza plans, there are a number of things that you can do to prepare and to minimize the impact. A severe pandemic influenza situation means that it will not be "business as usual" for many agencies. In an extreme situation, you may need to modify your services or even shut down your agency completely. In case of a severe pandemic, many employees/volunteers may have to stay home because they are ill, or to take care of ill family members, or to look after children as a result of possible school and day nursery closures. Many agencies providing essential services may face additional demand for services. Developing a plan for your agency will help you prepare for any emergency. The following questions should assist your agency in planning for pandemic influenza.

- What services provided by your agency would you consider as essential and what services could be reduced or postponed during a pandemic? What would be the impact?
- What additional measures could you introduce during a pandemic to minimize the spread of illness within your agency? For example, are flexible working arrangements such as staggered hours or working from home possible?
- Do you have policies in place that address staff overtime, illness and absenteeism? Would your existing policies cover "forced time off" such as if you are forced to reduce your services or close your agency?
- What would you do if staff/volunteers came to work sick with the flu?
- How will you keep your staff, volunteers and clients informed of any service changes or urgent information? Do you have an up-to-date contact list for employees/volunteers and clients?

- Could staff access your building after hours if needed?
- Can you identify your clients who are likely to be most vulnerable and are you able to contact them?
- Distribution of goods and services could be disrupted if there is widespread absenteeism across all sectors. How long would you be able to sustain your services with current supply levels? Are you in a position to stockpile supplies that are necessary for you to sustain your operations for six to eight weeks?
- Do you have adequate supplies to promote good hygiene, such as soap, tissues, paper towels, and hand sanitizer?
- Do you encourage your staff/volunteers/clients to get an annual flu shot?

We encourage you to think about these and similar issues now to reduce the impact of pandemic influenza on your agency, staff/volunteers, clients and the community.

Planning Checklist – Short Version

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No	Comments
Does your organization have an emergency plan?		
Have you identified which tasks and positions would be essential during an emergency?		
Have you considered how to keep your organization operational with a large number of staff ill and unable to work?		
Have you considered how to continue service delivery when normal methods are disrupted?		
Have you developed a service continuity plan for your organization for decreasing or altering the services that you offer?		
Do you have a mechanism to monitor increases in staff absenteeism?		
Have you considered how you would communicate information to your staff and clients in an efficient manner?		
Have you considered how you would provide your staff with support and counseling?		
Do you know how to get up-to-date and accurate information about influenza and the pandemic?		
Have you trained your employees on proper hand washing and respiratory etiquette?		
Is your cleaning staff aware of proper disinfecting techniques during a pandemic?		
Have you considered stockpiling necessary supplies?		
Have you considered how to deal with employees who report to work ill?		
Have you made your employees aware of emergency response plans?		
In case of a death on-site, do you know who to contact? (ambulance, coroner, funeral home)?		

Planning Checklist – Long Version

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision making process
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Activation/Termination of Pandemic Flu Response Plan

Who has responsibility for activating the Continuity of Operations Plan for your organization and who is that person's back up?		
Has your organization identified a process through which the decision will be made to activate and terminate the Plan?		
Do you have a communication strategy for reaching employees and business partners as a result of having to implement any section of the Continuity of Operations Plan?		

Decision-making and Reporting

Who will be in charge and make decisions within your organization on services during a pandemic/emergency episode?		
Who is identified as being in charge in the event of a pandemic influenza and are the roles of the various stakeholders clearly defined?		
Who makes what decisions?		
Who needs to approve the Pandemic Response Plan?		
Who will make decisions about reducing levels of service and/or terminating services temporarily?		

Agencies and Stakeholder Communications

Do you have a relevant list of all agencies and stakeholders?		
Who notifies the various stakeholders?		

Communications with Staff and the General Public

Who will be in charge of communicating to the employees in your organization and who is their back up person(s)?		
Have you prepared site-specific notification for office closures and contacts for the public?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision making process
If mail service is interrupted, is their critical mail delivery for which you need to make alternative arrangements?		
How will reduction/temporary termination of regular services be communicated to local stakeholders and the public?		
Who has authority to issue public service announcements/new releases and who is their back up?		
How fast can these announcements be produced and approved?		
Do you know where to get up-to-date and accurate information about Influenza and the pandemic? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccine and antiviral medications • Infection control • Personal care • Public Health Measures 		

Planning

Who do you need input from, both internally and externally, to prepare and review a continuity of operations plan for your agency/business? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials • Legal counsel • Community partners • Labour Unions/bargaining unit 		
Who is in charge in the event of a pandemic episode and are the roles of the various stakeholders clearly defined? Who makes what decisions? Who notifies the stakeholders?		
Is the Pandemic Influenza continuity of operations plan integrated with your emergency preparedness plan(s)?		
Who needs to approve the continuity of operations plan?		
Is your organization's continuity of operations plan integrated with the municipal/county emergency plan and Renfrew County & District Pandemic Influenza Plan?		
What is the staff capacity and are there provisions to bring in additional staff or volunteers?		
Have you identified the key services that must be provided? (Note: take into account minor to major lack of availability of staff due to illness).		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision making process
Has your organization identified possible key functions, staff positions, and supplies for each key service?		
Testing of the Plan		
How will you test and/or evaluate your continuity of operational plan?		
How will you test your communication systems, e.g. fan-out?		
Training and Orientation		
What are the training needs pertaining to an influenza pandemic and the continuity of operations plan for internal (staff) and external stakeholders? • Infection control measures • Environmental cleaning • Equipment use • Roles and responsibilities		
What additional training will volunteers and reassigned staff require?		
Educational Materials		
Have educational materials been prepared/obtained?		
Have public education efforts been planned?		
Human Resources		
Is there a list of all employees complete with telephone numbers (home and business) and job titles (including those recently retired)?		
Does your organization maintain a fan-out list to contact employees?		
Is there a contact list of all senior staff within your agency?		
If transportation becomes a problem, can employees arrange alternate forms of transportation to work, e.g. carpooling?		
Has your organization addressed the issue of staff being unable to report to work due to possible school and daycare closures?		
Do you currently have adequate staffing for regular day-to-day function?		
Do you have a mechanism to monitor increases in staff absenteeism?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision making process
Has your organization prepared an inventory of skills and professional competencies in the event that people from your organization are required to perform duties/functions in other divisions/programs to maintain essential services?		
How has your organization planned to maintain the employee payroll?		
Health and Safety		
Is there a copy of the Health and Safety Manual on site in your organization?		
Have insurance and union issues been addressed?		
Has an inventory been prepared for specialized equipment/facilities that may be needed during an influenza pandemic?		
Have liability issues been addressed for volunteers and re-assigned staff?		
Have support care services been planned for employees? • Psychosocial support • Grief Counseling		
Materials and Support		
Who is signing authority for expenditures during an emergency and who is their alternate?		
Are there clearly stated policies and procedures that cover signing authority and acquisitions?		
Is there a mechanism that will ensure that additional equipment (e.g., cell phones, pagers, refrigerators, etc.) can be obtained with minimum delay?		
Who has authority for ordering repair/replacement for equipment and who is their alternate?		
Are you currently stocked with all of the necessary supplies for regular day-to-day function?		
Does your organization have contact lists for all your supplies and alternate suppliers?		
Who authorizes repairs and supply/equipment orders? Are there other employees who can take over this responsibility during the influenza pandemic?		
Who has a recovery phase planned for (e.g., depleted supplies or backlogs)?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision making process
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Documentation and Record Keeping

Has your organization developed appropriate record keeping procedures for such items as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints and issues raised • Significant decisions made • Regular reporting to provincial/federal governments as required. 		
Are there people in your organization who have sole access to incoming information (e.g., reports, complaints, etc.) and who are their alternates?		

Information and Technology

Does your organization maintain a central inventory of passwords to office equipment and electronic files?		
If your information and technology person is ill, who is their alternate?		
Does your organization have access to inventory (including serial numbers) of all computer equipment, printers, fax machines, photocopiers in case repairs are needed?		
Does your organization have contact lists for all equipment repair persons?		
Will there be a website/telephone call-in line to update staff and public?		

Facilities

Could any of the organization's services be provided from another work location?		
If necessary, could staff live at the work location or alternative work location for some period of time?		
Who is your security contact should there be a problem with physical access to your work location and who is their alternate?		
How are courier packages generally sent out and received?		

Procurement of additional resources

Who has the responsibility for procurement matters, e.g., ordering resources and/or equipment during an influenza pandemic?		
Who will be responsible for payment issues related to overtime and/or additional salary issues and who is their alternate?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision making process
Who has the authority to hire contract/temporary workers and to take on volunteers and who is their alternate?		
Is there a pre-approval process in place for purchasing additional supplies? If not, how long does it take for the approval process?		
Post Pandemic Influenza		
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, clients and stakeholders regarding the agency's return to full service?		
Who will decide to reinstate full service?		

Adapted from the Ontario Ministry of Health & Long Term Care Pandemic Influenza Response Plan Template – July 27, 2001

Pandemic Influenza Web Links

For more information on pandemic influenza, please visit the following websites:

Renfrew County & District Health Unit
www.rcdhu.com

Ontario Pandemic Influenza Plan
www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_plan.html

Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cpip-pclcpi/

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, checklist for faith-based and community organizations
www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/faithcomchecklist.html#1

Contact Information

For more information about pandemic influenza, please contact The Health Info Line at 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 ext. 666