



**Toronto
Pandemic Influenza
Plan**

A Planning Guide for Community Agencies

 **TORONTO** Public Health

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Pandemic Influenza Information for Community Agencies

Toronto Public Health has prepared a number of planning guides to assist community partners in developing their own pandemic influenza plans. These documents were based on planning assumptions for a moderately severe pandemic and are therefore not meant to provide specific direction for responding to the 2009 H1N1 novel virus. The guides are intended to be used as planning tools. All agencies, businesses and other partners in the community should use these tools alongside the specific advice provided by federal, provincial and local authorities during an actual pandemic situation.

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

TPH, 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, TPH web site and our Toronto Health Connections telephone information 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. The City of Toronto is developing plans to keep the City's key municipal services operating during a pandemic.

Decisions regarding any closure of schools, day nurseries, and cancellation of social gatherings will be made by TPH, 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? Are there service providers and clients that need to know this plan now?

- 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, 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.

Pandemic Influenza Information

Influenza is a common and highly contagious viral respiratory illness which presents with acute onset of fever, cough and one or more of the following: sore throat, arthralgia, myalgia, or prostration (as well as gastrointestinal symptoms in children under five).

Influenza epidemics occur in our community almost every year, usually in the winter. A pandemic is an epidemic that occurs worldwide or over a large area, crossing international boundaries and usually affects a large number of people. In recent history, influenza pandemics have occurred three or four times each century, with the last one occurring in 1968. Most health experts agree that another influenza pandemic will occur, but the exact timing and severity cannot be predicted. Planning and preparedness activities for such an emergency have begun and are ongoing, with the goals of minimizing illness, death and societal disruption.

The Role of Toronto Public Health

Toronto Public Health (TPH) is the lead in pandemic influenza preparedness for the City of Toronto. Specific TPH roles during a pandemic influenza emergency response include:

- Disease surveillance and reporting.
- Case and contact investigation and management.
- Health risk assessment and communications, including infection control advice.
- Liaison with hospitals and other agencies.
- Assessing the capacity of local health services, including health human resources.
- Community-based disease control strategies.
- Mass immunization.
- Planning for alternative strategies for influenza assessment, treatment and referral services for vulnerable and underserved populations.

- Coordinating the provision of psychosocial supports.

The role of TPH and the City of Toronto is described in more detail in the Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan at www.toronto.ca/health. For more information, call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

Pandemic Influenza Web Links

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

Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan

http://www.toronto.ca/health/pandemicflu/pandemicflu_plan.htm

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/index.html

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 Toronto Health Connection 416-338-7600.