

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLAN GUIDELINES

August 2009



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1.0 Introduction

Pandemic Influenza Plan Guidelines for DoDEA Schools has been designed as a fluid document. These guidelines will be constantly updated to incorporate the most recent information to assist schools. According to the World Health Organization: “An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus appears against which the human population has no immunity, resulting in several, simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illness. With the increase in global transport and communications, as well as urbanization and overcrowded conditions, epidemics due to the new influenza virus are likely to quickly take hold around the world.”

Influenza, commonly called “the flu,” is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). Influenza usually spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and the virus is sent into the air. Influenza can cause illness in all ages, and it is more likely than other viral respiratory infections, such as the common cold, to cause severe illness and life-threatening complications. Annually, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from influenza. Approximately 36,000 people die from the flu and its complications every year. Should an influenza pandemic occur, the incidence of illness and death from influenza will likely dramatically increase worldwide.

Guidance, direction and two-way communication from the DoDEA Headquarters to DoDEA schools world-wide is firmly in place. DoDEA schools, local commands and other agencies work in cooperation with each other. The intent of the *Pandemic Influenza Plan Guidelines for DoDEA Schools* is to reinforce this relationship. A pandemic flu planning effort has been underway for several months and continues. Changes and updates are expected on a periodic basis.

2.0 General Information

2.1 Background.

The twentieth century saw three pandemics of influenza:

- The 1918 influenza pandemic caused at least 500,000 U.S. deaths and up to 50 million deaths worldwide.
- The 1957 influenza pandemic caused at least 70,000 U.S. deaths and one to two million deaths worldwide.
- The 1968 influenza pandemic caused about 34,000 U.S. deaths and 700,000 deaths worldwide.

Public health authorities have identified characteristics and challenges unique to a pandemic such as:

- When the pandemic influenza virus emerges; its global spread is considered inevitable.
- Most people will have little or no immunity to a pandemic virus, and a significant percentage of the population will require medical care.
- Death rates will be high due to the significant number of people who become infected, the virulence of the virus, the characteristics and vulnerability of affected populations (elderly, those with chronic disease, and children), and the effectiveness of preventative measures.
- Past pandemics have spread globally in two, and sometimes three, waves.
- Medical supplies may be inadequate. Vaccine for the virus may not be available for six months. The supply will be limited, availability of antiviral drugs is likely to be less than the demand, and hospital beds and other supplies will be limited.
- Pandemics also cause economic and social disruption such as school and business closing, travel bans, and canceling of community events.
- Care of sick family members and fear of exposure can result in significant absenteeism in the workforce.

Avian influenza, also known as bird flu, refers to a large group of different influenza viruses that primarily affect birds. Wild birds can carry the viruses, but usually do not get sick from them. However, some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks and turkeys, can become infected, and will often die from the virus. Avian influenza (strain H5N1) was first detected in humans in 1997 in Hong Kong, where it infected both chickens and people.

This was the first time the avian influenza virus had ever been found to jump directly from birds to humans. During this outbreak, 18 people were hospitalized, and six died. Since then there have been several other outbreaks in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Symptoms of avian influenza in humans have ranged from typical influenza-like symptoms, such as fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches and eye infections, to pneumonia, acute respiratory distress, viral pneumonia, and other severe and life threatening complications.

Where we are now: On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization signaled that a global pandemic of novel influenza A (H1N1) was underway by raising the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6. This action was a reflection of the spread of the new H1N1 virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus. At the time, more than 70 countries had reported cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) infection and there were ongoing community level outbreaks of novel H1N1 in multiple parts of the world.

2.2 Potential Impact:

- Spread and severity. Should a pandemic flu outbreak occur, a significant percentage of the population could become ill over several months. Global spread could occur within three months. It is anticipated that a vaccine for the specific influenza virus would not be available for six months after the initial outbreak. Antiviral treatment for the influenza would most likely be in short supply and may not be effective.
- School Impact and Issues. There would be a significant potential for school closings with large numbers of staff absent, difficulty in maintaining school operations, a loss of services from suppliers (e.g. food services and transportation) and a student absenteeism elevated above normal trends due to illness and family decisions.
- Community Considerations. Large percentages of the population may be unable to work for days to weeks during the pandemic. A significant number of people and expertise would be unavailable. Emergency and essential services such as fire, police, and medical support would be diminished. School operations could be affected. Methods of continued instruction must be implemented should schools close.

2.3 Links. The following links are several good sources of information about the flu and other contagious diseases:

- The Center for Disease Control (CDC); <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- Office of Personnel Management; Planning for Pandemic Influenza; <http://www.opm.gov/Pandemic/index.asp>
- Department of Defense Pandemic Information; <http://fhp.osd.mil/aiwatchboard/>
- Comprehensive government-wide information on pandemic influenza; <http://www.flu.gov/>
- World Health Organization (WHO); <http://www.who.int/en/>
- State Department Information; <http://travel.state.gov>

3.0 Pandemic Influenza Periods and Associated Phases

The World Health Organization has identified three periods of a pandemic: inter-pandemic period, pandemic alert period and the pandemic period. Each period has corresponding phases. The phases reflect the progression of a new strain of influenza from the animal population to the human population and from localized to widespread transmission of disease.

3.1 Inter-pandemic Period (Phases 1 & 2)

- Phase 1- No new influenza subtypes have been detected in humans.
- Phase 2- No new influenza subtypes have been detected in humans, however, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.

3.2 Pandemic Alert Period (Phases 3, 4 & 5)

- Phase 3- Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human-to-human transmission.
- Phase 4- Small clusters with limited human-to-human transmission and spread is highly localized.
- Phase 5- Larger clusters but human-to-human spread is still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans.

3.3 Pandemic Period (Phase 6)

- Phase 6- Increased and sustained transmission in the general population, recovery, and preparation for subsequent waves.

4.0 Authorities

In accordance with the Department of Defense Directive 6200.3 – the Emergency Health Powers on Military Installations; The Installation Commander and/or delegated designee are the authority for school closures.

- Emergency Health Powers on Military Installations, DoD Directive 6200.3; <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/620003p.pdf>
- Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs: Subj: Department of Defense Policy for Prioritizing Delivery of Medical Care during Pandemics and Other Public Health Emergencies of National Significance...dated Sep 1, 2008

- Memorandum from the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness:
 Subj: Public Health Emergency Management of the 2009 H1N1 Flu...dated May 11, 2009

5.0 Outbreak Response/Responsibilities

The following provides guidance to be followed in developing and/or improving plans to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic. It is intended as a minimum requirement, a response should be expanded as appropriate.

- Infection Control Policies and Procedures:
 - Work with the local health officials to implement effective infection prevention policies and procedures that help limit the spread of influenza at schools. Make good hygiene a habit now in order to help protect children from many infectious diseases such as flu. **In the event of a known case/cases of influenza, implement immediate cleaning and surface disinfection strategies.** Ensure that sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies are available (e.g., soap, alcohol based/waterless hand hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal).
 - Use of disinfectants registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is recommended whenever these are available. Lists of all registered disinfectants can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>. Many, if not all, of these products indicate potency for several target pathogens, on the label. There are approximately 400 registered disinfectants with human influenza A and/or B listed on the product label, and all will inactivate influenza viruses when used according to manufacturer instructions.
- Planning and Coordination:
 - Delineate accountability and responsibility as well as resources for key personnel engaged in planning and executing specific components of the operational plan. Assure that the plan includes timelines, deliverables, and performance measures.

- Assure that pandemic planning is coordinated with the community and commands pandemic plan as well as the state/country's department of education's plan.
- Incorporate into the pandemic influenza plan the requirements of students with special needs, as well as those who do not speak English as their first language.
- Implement an exercise/drill to test your pandemic plan and revise it periodically. Participate in exercises of the community/command's pandemic plan.
- Continuity of student learning and core operations:
 - With technology includes: Using available online textbooks to continue class assignments. Accessing school's intranet website to download .pdf packets of lesson assignments. Keeping an electronic journal for each of the core subjects. Utilizing web based distance learning. Utilizing homework hotline (intranet). Blogging and on-line chatting with teacher through Gaggle.
 - Continuation of learning without Technology includes: Providing packet of lesson assignments. Taking textbooks home to continue class assignments. Keeping a written journal for each of the core subjects. Utilizing homework hotline (telephone).
- Communication Planning:
 - Assess readiness to meet communication needs in preparation for an influenza pandemic, including regular review, testing, and updating of communication plans.
 - Develop a dissemination plan for communication with staff, students, and families, including lead spokespersons and links to other communication networks.
 - Develop and test platforms (e.g., hotlines, telephone trees, dedicated websites, and local radio or TV stations) for communicating pandemic status and actions to school district staff, students, and families.

6.0 Miscellaneous Information

6.1 Checklist for Individuals and Families:

- Preparation for an influenza pandemic must be ongoing. We should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on us and our families. This checklist (Appendix A) will help gather the information and resources we may need in case of a flu pandemic.

6.2 Health Tips During a Flu Pandemic:

- Appendix B covers a plan for an extended stay at home during a flu pandemic and items to have on hand for an extended stay at home. It also covers the situation when someone in your home develops flu symptoms. There are also tips on how to protect yourself against the spread of the flu and other germs and viruses and if you do come down with a cold or the flu, steps to get well.

6.3 Social Distancing:

- Although data is limited, school closures may be effective in decreasing spread of influenza and reducing the overall magnitude of disease in a community. In addition, the risk of infection and illness among children is likely to be decreased, which would be particularly important if the pandemic strain causes significant morbidity and mortality among children. Children are known to be efficient transmitters of seasonal influenza and other respiratory illnesses. Anecdotal reports suggest that community influenza outbreaks may be limited by closing schools. Results of mathematical modeling also suggest a reduction of overall disease, especially when schools are closed early in the outbreak. During a Pandemic Period, parents would be encouraged to consider child care arrangements that do not result in large gatherings of children outside the school setting. More information is found at Appendix C.

6.4 School closure strategies:

- District superintendents and principals, in consultation with local commanders and health officials are in the best position to assess the needs of the community when determining when schools should close. More information at Appendix D.

6.5 Communications:

- **Communication to Employees:**
 - Review the school Pandemic Plan, with all employees.
 - In advance, provide up-to-date and reliable pandemic influenza information.
 - Communicate and educate faculty/staff on the basic ways to stay healthy and reduce chances of contracting influenza.
 - Share communication methods and processes.
 - Establish building level procedures for providing information to the public and news media.
 - Test the communication plan.
- **Communication to Students/Parents/Guardians:**
 - Provide information about the school's pandemic preparedness and response plan to include individual/family responsibilities.
 - Provide accurate information rapidly. Disseminate information to parents about the potential impact of a pandemic on school functioning, such as arranging for childcare and continuity of instruction should schools be closed.
 - Provide parents tips for planning for a pandemic.
 - Provide a checklist as appropriate.
 - Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate communications, taking care to meet the needs of all students/families with special needs.

6.6 Sample Letters, Sample Forms for Communication to Parents and Staff. (Appendix E):

- Sample Letter: Prevention and Information
- Sample Letter: First Flu Case
- Sample Letter: Initial Pandemic Flu Outbreak
- Sample Letter: Expanded Outbreak
- Sample Letter: School Closure
- Sample Letter: School Re-opens

7.0 Definitions

7.1 Social distancing:

- A voluntary, recommended limitation of physical contact. It can be simple, such as maintaining a three-foot distance and not shaking hands, or more complex, like staying home and avoiding public places and events. If more aggressive measures are required, schools may close and call “snow days”, businesses may be asked to temporarily close or have employees work from home, travel restrictions may be necessary and social events may be canceled.

7.2 Access Control:

- A policy that enables school administrators to control access to the buildings. Each school should have a plan to lock down certain entrances and exits and to monitor others, if necessary. Identify a main entrance and an indoor screening area where students and staff will be screened prior to moving to classrooms or other areas of the building for each school. Develop a plan to close down or curtail bus transportation when necessary.

7.3 Pandemic:

- An epidemic of infectious disease that is spreading through human populations across a large region; for instance a continent, or even worldwide. A widespread endemic disease that is stable in terms of how many people are getting sick from it is not a pandemic. Further, flu pandemics exclude seasonal flu. Throughout history there have been a number of pandemics, such as smallpox and tuberculosis. More recent pandemics include the HIV pandemic and the 2009 flu pandemic.

7.4 World Health Organization (WHO):

- A specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that acts as a coordinating authority on international public health. Established on 7 April 1948, and headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the agency inherited the mandate and resources of its predecessor, the Health Organization, which had been an agency of the League of Nations.

7.5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- An agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services based in the Metro Atlanta area, adjacent to the campus of Emory University and northeast of downtown Atlanta. It works to protect public health and safety by providing information to enhance health decisions, and it promotes health through partnerships with state health departments and other organizations. The CDC focuses national attention on developing and applying disease prevention and control (especially infectious diseases), environmental health, occupational safety and health, health promotion, prevention and education activities designed to improve the health of the people of the United States.

7.6 Travel Alerts:

- CDC and the State Department provide travel notices for international travelers: CDC; <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/notices.aspx>, State Department; <http://travel.state.gov/>

7.7 Isolation:

- To separate an individual with a specific infectious illness from those who are healthy and have not been exposed to the contagion. This involves physical separation from others in order to stop the spread of illness and allows for the delivery of specialized health care to protect healthy people from getting sick. This may be accomplished in the home or in a separate room in a hospital depending on the specific nature of the event.

7.8 Quarantine:

- A necessary physical separation and restriction of movement of individuals, families, groups and communities that have been *exposed* to a contagious disease, but are not ill. Quarantines are the segregation of these persons within defined geographic areas. Quarantines may be done at home or in a restricted area depending on the specific nature of the event.

8.0 References

8.1 DDESS Pandemic information at: <http://www.am.dodea.edu>

8.2 DoDDS Europe Pandemic information at: <http://www.eu.dodea.edu>

8.3 DoDDS Pacific Pandemic information at: <http://www.pac.dodea.edu>

8.4 DoDEA Headquarters Pandemic information at: <http://www.dodea.edu>

APPENDIX A

Checklist for Individuals and Families

1. To plan for a pandemic:

- Store a supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters.
- Ask your doctor and insurance company if you can get an extra supply of your regular prescription drugs.
- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

2. To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behavior.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behavior.
- Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.

3. Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

Examples of food and non-perishables

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, and soups
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Dried fruit
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Bottled water
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Pet food

Examples of medical, health, and emergency supplies

- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
- Soap and water, or alcohol-based hand wash
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Portable radio
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

APPENDIX B

Health Tips for During a Flu Pandemic

1. Plan for an extended stay at home during a flu pandemic.

- Ask your chain of command about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Ask your chain of command if you can work from home during a flu pandemic.
- Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income, if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand.
- Plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.

2. Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

Examples: Non-perishable foods Health and emergency supplies

Ready to eat canned meats, prescribed medical supplies such as fruits, vegetables, soups, glucose and blood pressure monitoring, protein or fruit bars, soap and water or alcohol based hand wash, dry cereal or granola Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen, peanut butter and jelly, Tylenol, Motrin, dried fruit, nuts, trail mix, Thermometer, crackers, vitamins, canned juices, fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte, bottled water, flashlight with extra batteries, canned or jarred baby food, portable radio with extra batteries, baby formula, manual can opener, pet food, garbage bags, tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers. These are just examples, an actual list could be more extensive.

3. If someone in your home develops flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches):

- Encourage plenty of fluids to drink.
- Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (aspirin).
- Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Sponging with tepid (wrist-temperature) water lowers fever only during the period of sponging. Do not sponge with alcohol.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within reach of the patient.
- All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.

- Keep other family members and visitors away from the person who is ill.
- Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

4. Protect yourself against the spread of the flu and other germs and viruses:

- The main way illnesses like the flu and the common cold spread is by tiny droplets sprayed into the air when someone coughs or sneezes. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Throw away used tissues immediately.
- Wash hands thoroughly and often. That means using soap and warm water and washing for 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when hand washing is not possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when you touch something contaminated with germs. Germs can live for two hours or more on surfaces like doorknobs, desks or chairs.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.
- Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/> for more information.

5. If you do come down with a cold or the flu, take these steps to get well:

- Wash your hands often.
- Stay home and keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink lots of fluids like water, tea, broth or juice.
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen as needed for pain or fever.
- Use a vaporizer or saline drops to relieve congestion.

Pandemic Influenza: Health Tips at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/>

APPENDIX C

Social Distancing

To facilitate social distancing in the presence of a novel influenza virus, installation commanders should consider closing facilities such as theaters and recreational venues where crowds may gather. Activities that would foster the formation of crowds may be canceled or modified to circumvent crowd formation. If feasible, this action should be initiated in communities prior to the arrival of Pandemic Influenza and continued throughout the period of time the pandemic wave is affecting the community. Planning with local clergy to establish ways that the community might receive pastoral care and engage in worship without exposure to crowds should be undertaken as part of pre-pandemic planning. If enclosed spaces cannot be avoided, then at least 3-6 feet should be provided between individuals. Ceremonial formations should not be held when pandemic influenza is affecting a community. Required formations such as training and drills should be limited.

Teleconferencing should be employed whenever possible in preference to face-to-face meetings and nonessential meetings canceled. In the workplace additional measures should be implemented if appropriate, to include telecommuting and liberal leave policies for those in isolation or in quarantine. Restructuring the workplace and work practices to facilitate social distancing, while maintaining operational effectiveness, should also be employed. This may include staggered work hours, provision of increased public transportation with seating to ensure safe distancing, and consultation with vendors to develop “push packages” of essential supplies that can be picked up via drive-through/drive-by.

It is recommended that before any decisions are made regarding modifying or cancelling large gatherings on base, that the latest CDC recommendations on public gatherings be reviewed at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/gatherings.htm>

APPENDIX D

School closure/mitigation strategies

The decision to close schools is complex. Therefore, it is not feasible to give a one-size-fits-all answer to the question, “When should schools close?” District superintendents and principals, in consultation with local commanders and health officials are in the best position to assess the needs of the community when determining when schools should close. Prolonged disruption of the education system could severely impact other key social structures (e.g., conflicts for working parents, high absenteeism in the workplace, structures critical to the pandemic response).

Community actions may significantly reduce illness and death. Triggers for closing school may include increased absenteeism, decreased instructional and support workforce, students kept at home out of fear, the number and severity of cases of influenza in the community and surrounding area, inability to get needed supplies (e.g., food, heating oil, no public transportation), and the need to use the facility for other purposes.

The CDC has prepared *Interim Pre-pandemic Planning Guidance: Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation*. This can be found at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/commitigation.html>

Appendix 6 of 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 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.

Updated guidance was published by the CDC on August 7, 2009 and can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/schoolguidance.htm>

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER: Prevention and Information

Use this letter to help prepare parents for pandemic flu *at the outset of the school year*

Dear Parents,

This letter will help your family prepare for a flu pandemic. As you are probably aware, on June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization signaled that a global pandemic of Novel Influenza A (H1N1/Swine Flu) was underway by raising the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6, the last Pandemic Period (global pandemic underway). This action was a reflection of the spread of the new H1N1 virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus. At the time, more than 70 countries had reported cases of Novel Influenza A infection and there were ongoing community level outbreaks of Novel Influenza A in multiple parts of the world.

We are prepared during this upcoming school year to take the appropriate actions to help safeguard the health and well-being of your children. These actions will range from common sense steps to help prevent the spread of the flu to possible temporary school closures in the event of a widespread and prolonged flu pandemic. Decisions on any school closures would be made by local commanders and military health officials as part of a community-wide response to the pandemic flu.

Public health officials want people to protect themselves against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to protect your family:

- 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.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for a pandemic flu outbreak. This information can also help your family get ready for any kind of emergency.

**If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER) or school website. The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>
American Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org>**

SAMPLE LETTER: First Flu Case

Use this letter to help prepare parents for pandemic flu after the first case is found in your school. Even though the confirmation of a _____ infected with _____ flu in the United States does not signal a pandemic, there will be confusion and concern when this happens.

Dear Parents,

As expected, _____ sick with _____ flu viruses are now in the United States. It is important to know that, at this time, there are no known human cases of _____ flu in the United States. Health officials are worried that the _____ flu virus may change so that people can get sick from it. If that happened it could spread from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic. So even though there is no flu pandemic now, we want to remind you about some ways to protect your family from getting sick:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- Teach your children to wash hands a lot 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 stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.
- Do not touch sick or dead birds. Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for a pandemic flu outbreak.

This information can also help your family get ready for any kind of emergency.

**If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER) or school website. The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>
The American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>**

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS: Initial Pandemic Flu Outbreak
Use this letter to give parents basic information about a pandemic flu outbreak.

Dear Parents,

This letter will give you information about a flu outbreak in **[Insert your county/city here]**. Every year, some people get sick with the flu during the fall and winter months. This year, there is a new flu virus that is making many people in **[Insert your county/city here]** sick. So many people are sick in **[Insert your county/city here]** and the United States that health officials call it a “pandemic flu.” A lot of students and teachers in our school are sick with the flu. We hope they will all get better quickly. At this time, ___ tells us that 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 flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home. Public health officials want you to protect yourself and your family against pandemic flu. 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 a lot 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 stay away at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- 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, movie theaters or other places where there are large groups of people. We are also giving you some tips about how to care for your family if they are ill.

If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER) or school website. The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>
The American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, schools may close for days or weeks. Begin planning now for childcare in your home. Recommendations may change during the course of a pandemic flu outbreak.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS: Expanded Outbreak
Use this letter to let parents know schools are open and urge ill children to stay home.

Dear Parents,

We wrote to you recently to tell you about a pandemic flu outbreak in our community. Here is some new information. There are now even more students in our school who are ill with this flu virus. The county health department tells us that students who are not ill may continue to attend school. Schools remain open at this time. We will keep you updated with any important information. To keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home. Public health officials want you to protect yourself and your family against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness and take care of your family:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu, keep them away from the people who are not sick.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu and you cannot see a health provider, some things you can do to help them are:
 - o Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
 - o Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
 - o For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, in adults, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
 - o Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
 - o Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
 - o Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER) or school website. If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, schools may close for 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. Begin planning now for childcare in your home.

The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

The American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>

SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS: School closure
Use this letter to inform parents of school closing.

Dear Parents,

The _____ health officials have ordered all schools in _____ to close. This order is because of the pandemic flu situation in - _____. 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 flu. We know that many students and their families are very sick. We know this is a hard time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. Because the flu 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. We know that it may be hard to get a doctor's appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. Here are some tips for helping those who are sick with the flu:

- Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water, etc.).
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER) or school website. The purpose of closing schools will be to keep children from getting sick. If schools are closed, children should stay at home.

The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

The American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will reopen.

SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS: School Re-Opens
Use this letter to inform parents schools are re-opened.

Dear Parents,

The _____ health officials have declared the pandemic flu is under control. Our school will open again on _____ . At this time, students may safely return to class. Even though school is opening, there are still some people who are sick from the flu virus. And health officials say that pandemic flu 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. We will continue to give you any important information. Because the flu 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.