

PANDEMIC PLANNING

Beautiful Plains School Division



IMPORTANT

A decision to publicly activate the Pandemic Plan will be made by the Senior Administration in consultation with the appropriate Federal, Provincial and Regional agencies. Until such time, the checklists are to be used only for internal planning. We recognize it is appropriate to advise students and their families as to proper preventative measures regarding illness.

Checklists are intended as guidelines only. School administrators may add to them as needed. It should be noted, however, that the checklists reflect many “just in case” scenarios. If followed, they will provide a sound basis for planning. Items within the checklists are in no particular order of importance.

WHAT IS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?

Pandemic influenza is an epidemic that spreads throughout the world. Influenza viruses can undergo major changes or shifts in genetic makeup, producing a completely new strain for which most people have little or no specific immunity. As a result, large numbers of individuals become infected as it spreads.

For an influenza virus to be considered a pandemic, it must be a new virus with the ability to spread efficiently among people, causing widespread illness and death.

While much has been learned from past pandemics in history (1918-19; 1956-58; and 1968-69), there is much we do not know and research is ongoing.

HOW IS INFLUENZA SPREAD?

The influenza virus enters the body through the nose, eyes or throat.

- When people with influenza cough or sneeze, large droplets containing the virus are produced and can travel up to one metre in the air.
- Inhaling these droplets or having them come into contact with your mouth, eyes or nose can result in infection. This can occur by:
 - Hand-to-hand contact with infected individuals, or by
 - Touching surfaces or handling objects contaminated by infected individuals.
- Infected persons can be contagious from the day before they develop symptoms and up to seven days afterwards (typically three to five days in healthy adults and up to seven days in children). This time frame may be longer for children and people with decreased immune system functioning.

Not everyone who comes in contact with influenza virus will become ill. However, they may still spread it to others.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Once infected with influenza, it usually takes from one to three days to develop symptoms. Symptoms include:

- fever and a cough often accompanied by one or more of the following:
 - aching muscles and joints
 - headache
 - severe weakness and fatigue
 - sore throat
 - runny nose

- Children can have additional gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, but these symptoms are uncommon in adults.

Generally, symptoms can last four to seven days. A cough and general fatigue may persist for several weeks.

Most people recover from influenza without medical intervention. However, some people, particularly the very young or old, and those with compromised immune systems, can develop complications including bacterial infections such as pneumonia, which can result in prolonged illness or even death.

HOW WILL PANDEMIC INFLUENZA IMPACT US?

During a pandemic, it is expected there will be a greater extent of illness and death than experienced during an ordinary influenza season. However, most people who get ill will recover. Public health experts assume that:

- 35 percent of people could become sick enough to miss at least one-half day or more of work.¹
- Of those who get sick, 0.5 percent could die.²

A pandemic may occur over a two-year period. It may occur in waves with each wave lasting six to eight weeks and separated by three to nine months. A second wave may cause more serious illness and deaths than the first.

It is anticipated there will be three months warning from the time a pandemic is declared by the World Health Organization until the virus arrives in Canada. This is based on the assumption that a pandemic will start elsewhere in the world, then spread to North America.

¹ Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth/Manitoba Health, 2007, *Pandemic Influenza – Preparedness Guidelines for Manitoba School Divisions and Schools (K-12)*, pg. 7

² Ibid., pg. 7

BPSD'S RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

1. The interest of BPSD students is paramount in the determination of academic concerns in the event of a pandemic.
2. Students will be educated, at an age-appropriate level, about flu prevention and symptoms and will be encouraged to make appropriate personal health decisions during a pandemic.
3. During a pandemic, every effort will be made to continue to offer school services as normally as possible.
4. Schools will provide students and parents/guardians with timely communication regarding the school's plans and expectations for continued instruction.
5. Where possible, continuation of course work and assignments may be facilitated through independent coursework and technology.
6. Day-to-day instructional matters will be the communicated through the school principal.
7. Decisions to extend the term, revise exam schedules or alter the academic schedule will be made by the board of trustees and superintendent.
8. Decisions will be made at the school level regarding students who have missed or not completed work due to illness, class cancellations, or other reasons connected to the pandemic.
9. In the event all schools close, schools will provide parents with as much lead time as possible, the reasons for the closure, and a realistic estimate of the duration of the closure.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Section 2.62 of the Public Schools Act reminds parents to keep children out of school if they are ill.
2. All students will be asked to remain away from school and not attend classes if they are showing flu symptoms. Parents and guardians will be asked to contact the school and inform the office of the reason for the student's absence.
3. If a shutdown of their school has been announced, students will be expected to:
 - Remain away from the school during the shutdown.
 - Monitor the BPSD main website to determine the state of the alert at the school and establish when they can return. Emergency information will be posted online.
 - Monitor television and radio for announcements concerning their school.
4. Once a re-opening of the school has been announced, students will be expected to :
 - Report to class on the identified day.
 - If they are unable to report to class because they are in quarantine, nursing an infected person, or are ill with the pandemic influenza, they will be asked to contact the school and

inform the office of the reason for their absence.

EMERGENT ILLNESS AMONG STUDENTS WHILE AT SCHOOL

Schools have an area where children who become ill at school can be accommodated until their parents can be contacted to take them home.

POTENTIAL SPREAD OF INFECTION AT SCHOOL

Measures to reduce interpersonal exposure in BPSD buildings will be balanced with the need to maintain normal routines, school operations and day to day functioning. BPSD will:

- Establish a clear and well-communicated message that stresses the need for students and staff to stay home if they are displaying any flu-like symptoms.
- Minimize social interaction by:
 - Limiting visitor access to the school.
 - Limiting face-to-face meetings or number of persons in attendance.
 - Considering postponing some events that are open to the public and/or parents, including travel for intramural school activities when needed.
 - Increasing distance education and work-at-home options when needed.
- Promote personal hygiene practices by:
 - Educating and reminding students and others of the importance of preventive measures.

PREPARING FOR PANDEMIC – PARENTS

In response to recent news reports of a possible Pandemic Influenza occurrence, Beautiful Plains School Division feels it is appropriate to advise parents that schools within the Division will continue to operate as normally as possible in order to lessen potential disruption to society at large.

The school administrators remind students and staff to take precautions to improve general hygiene in order to prevent becoming infected and from spreading infection to others. At the same time, we also encourage parents to take steps at home to limit the spreading of infection.

These may include:

- Making efforts to improve your general health status through healthy living behaviours such as exercising, eating well, getting enough sleep and not smoking.
- Washing your hands often and teaching others to do the same
- Keeping your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes
- Not sharing eating utensils or drinks, or school supplies such as pencils, rulers or musical instruments with mouthpieces
- Covering your cough or coughing into your elbow
- Staying home if you are sick

Parents can access further information online by consulting the document entitled "Preparing for Pandemic Influenza in Manitoba". This document can be found online at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cmoh/docs/ppim.pdf>.

Other information is accessible online at:

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

DURING A PANDEMIC

BPSD will implement measures to minimize or slow the spread of influenza within its facilities and messages will stress that coming to work while sick is discouraged. Messages will also remind staff of the system in place to cover the work of those who are ill.

BPSD will communicate Manitoba Health advice on return to school and work timelines to staff, students and parents.

RESPONSIBILITIES CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. The school division will continue, as far as reasonably practical, to provide a safe and healthy environment in which to carry on the division's affairs during a pandemic.
2. The school division will rely on the appropriate public health authorities (e.g. Public Health Agency of Canada, Manitoba Health, Prairie Mountain Health Authority) to provide advice, guidance and support to the division on safety, health and environmental matters as resources permit during a pandemic.
3. The school division will liaise with its schools and work sites regarding pandemic mitigation, preparedness, and response and recovery action.
4. The school division will respond to requests for assistance based on a prioritized risk assessment of the issue/hazards.
5. The school division will evaluate and promote measures that are proven effective during a pandemic in protecting employees as endorsed by the public health authorities of Manitoba.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO EMPLOYEES

1. If the school division is shut down, regular employees who would be scheduled to work will continue to be paid.
2. In the event of a school closure, where feasible, employees will be reassigned to other schools/facilities within the division. This decision will be reviewed as the duration of the school closure is being assessed.
3. Employees who are unable to attend work due to illness will be covered by the existing sick leave provisions in appropriate collective agreements or division policies and procedures.
4. Where appropriate, employees may be reassigned to other schools/facilities within the division.
5. Maintenance of payroll, pension and benefits will be given priority. In instances where inaccurate disbursements are being made, the division will take corrective steps in the post pandemic stage.
6. Employees will be educated on flu symptoms and will be required to stay home if showing symptoms.
7. In the event of a divisional or school closure, employee income and benefit information will be communicated to the affected employees.
8. In the event of a divisional or school closure, BPSD may consider deferring staff leaves for non-health reasons, for example professional development, vacation or other reasons, if staff members are needed to cover for absent employees.

EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Employees will need to:
 - a) Immediately contact their supervisor if they are experiencing any influenza symptoms.
 - b) Follow the directions of their supervisor, including immediately departing the school or work site and contacting their physician by telephone.
2. If a school or work site shutdown has been announced while the employees are at work, employees will be expected to:
 - Report to their supervisors/administrators prior to leaving the school or work site.
 - Follow their supervisor's/administrator's directions, such as reporting to a temporary reassignment, or remaining away from work until notified.
 - Keep in contact with their supervisor/administrator by phone or e-mail to determine the state of alert and establish when they are to return.

3. Once a re-opening of the school or work site has been announced, employees will be expected to:
 - Report to work on the identified day, unless they have been advised otherwise by their supervisor/administrator.
 - If they are unable to report, they are to contact their supervisor/administrator to indicate the reason (e.g. under quarantine, nursing an infected person, are ill with the pandemic influenza, etc.)

RESPONSE PLAN FOR EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM

If the pandemic causes illness in 35 percent of the population, employers should expect up to 25 percent of their staff to be away from work during the peak two weeks of a pandemic wave of activity. Public health officials are using 25 percent absenteeism for planning purposes. Absenteeism among staff may be due to either personal or family illness.

Beautiful Plains School Division may consider these measures in response to a high rate of employee absenteeism:

- Designate backups for key decision makers and arrange for delegation of decision making and financial authority if they are available
- Discuss possible response measures with staff currently filling key roles
- Draw on substitute pool
- Use administrative personnel, retired teachers, parents and volunteers to assist as needed.
- Have some people licensed on temporary permits

ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

- Combine similar grades, since student absenteeism will likely reduce class sizes.
- Provide alternative activities that can be accommodated by fewer teaching staff.
- Continue instruction for students who are home and well enough to do school work, including home work.

Schools implement effective health practices and inform parents and others how to do so. Schools try to lessen potential societal disruption by continuing their operation as smoothly, and as normally as possible (if community members feel confident in sending their children to school, they will be able to carry on with their own work).

Impact on Schools:

- Employee absenteeism
- Student absenteeism
- Interruption of services and supplies and a reduction of outside supports
- Potential school closures
- Financial losses or incremental costs
- Potential spread of infection at school
- Staff and students becoming ill at school

The working expectation is that schools will continue to operate and provide an environment that is as safe as possible during a pandemic.

Decisions about school closures will be made by senior administration in consultation with Manitoba Education.

Preventative Steps:

- Washing your hands often and teaching others to do the same
- Keeping your hands away from your mouth, nose, and eyes
- Not sharing eating utensils or drinks, or school supplies such as pencils or rulers, or musical instruments with mouthpieces
- Covering your cough
- Staying home if you are sick

Further information can be accessed from the document entitled "Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Guidelines for Manitoba School Divisions and Schools (K-12).

This document is available online at:

www.gov.mb.ca/health/documents/pandemic_school.pdf.

Health Canada has released a statement specific to COVID-19, which is accessible online at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>