



Background

Calgary Girls Charter School, in cooperation with the provincial government and Alberta Health Services, supports efforts to minimize a pandemic and its disruption to the operational activities of the School. In the event of a pandemic, the school's response will focus on allocating the available resources to achieve the maximum benefit and protection of students, staff, and facilities.

Procedures

1. In the event that Alberta Health Services identifies evidence of a significant influenza outbreak, or pandemic in the region, the Superintendent has the authority to make final decisions regarding crisis response, as guided by the *Emergency Preparedness and Response Manuals*. When a Ministry of the Alberta Government declares a state of emergency, the particular Ministry will have such authority.
2. The Superintendent and Principal, as Pandemic Coordinators for the School, will communicate the response protocols for dealing with a pandemic to ensure the staff is familiar with roles and processes in the event of an outbreak.
3. In accordance with any directives from federal and provincial authorities, and the consequent circumstances that may prevail, the Pandemic Coordinators may temporarily suspend the School's current practices and operating guidelines.

Reference:

Education Act s. 3, 11, 27, 52, 53, 54, 196, 197, 222

Emergency Medical Aid Act

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Health Information Act

Occupational Health and Safety Act

Public Health Act

Communicable Disease Regulation (AR 238/85)



The following is a chronological list of important step-by-step actions the Schools is to take before, during and after a pandemic influenza outbreak. Pandemic influenza can have several cycles or waves so steps on this list may need to be repeated.

Important to note is that school closures may occur at any time under the direction of Medical Officer of Health. In the event of this occurrence, use (Form) to inform parents.

PRIOR TO OUTBREAK/PREPAREDNESS & PLANNING PHASE

- Review Pandemic Influenza plan as a part of the Emergency Response Planning for the year.
- Educate staff, students and parents about differences among seasonal influenza, bird flu, and pandemic influenza; best hygienic practices to prevent any sort of Influenza; and what could occur during a pandemic. Work with CHR local health officials and the school nurse(s).
- Plan a communication strategy to inform parents about symptoms based on information from the local health authority.
- Decide the roles and responsibilities of school staff to prevent the spread of Influenza.
- Train staff in Influenza-Symptom recognition. (See Appendix B – Pandemic Influenza – Background Information). Remember that a person who is infected does not show symptoms right away. But children who are getting ill may show different behaviour than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.
- Improve the hygiene of students and staff. Use simple non-medical ways to reduce the spread of Influenza by "cough and sneeze etiquette," clean hands, and clean work areas.
- Determine whether the school is to be cleaned differently or more often.
- Decide to what extent you will encourage or require children and staff to stay home when they are mildly ill.
- Review the health needs of students. Some students may have a greater risk of infections. Encourage those families to talk to their health care provider. Some parents may need to be more cautious and may keep their children out of school.

- The school Secretary will track students' names on an Influenza Log Reporting Sheet and report the number and/or percentage to the local health authorities if required.
- Insure that Standard Surveillance/Disease Recognition Procedures are in place and implemented.

Outbreak of Influenza Disease

LESS THAN 10% STUDENTS

- Begin Heightened Surveillance Reporting.
- Report any required surveillance information to the CHR Communicable Disease Unit/School Health Nurse.
- Inform parents that some students are sick but schools remain open.
- Any communication with the media is to be made by co-managers.

Expansion of the Outbreak

10% OR MORE OF STUDENTS ILL (but less than 30%)

- Absenteeism, as reported on the Influenza Log sheet, is reported to the School Health Nurse/CHR Communicable Disease Unit on a daily basis.
- Begin Intensive Surveillance Reporting.
- Send letter to inform parents that students are sick but schools remain open.

Continued Expansion of the Outbreak

School Closure Seems Imminent

- School closures may become necessary.
- School closures will be determined by the co-managers in consultation with the Charter Board or by the Calgary Health Region in communications with the co-managers.
- Send out Parent Letter announcing the closure of the school(s).

Following the Outbreak

- The CHR and/or the co-managers issue declaration that school will reopen.
- Send communication to parents.
- Continue communicating with School Health Nurse/CHR Communicable Disease Unit.
- Return to Heightened Surveillance Reporting.

DEFINITIONS OF SURVEILLANCE LEVELS

Standard Surveillance

No Influenza activity reported in the Calgary Health Region.

- Monitor daily attendance for increased reports of absence due to Influenza-like illness.
- Do not report absences to the Health Nurse/CHR unless they are greater than 10%.

Heightened Surveillance

Influenza activity reported in the Calgary Health Region (less than 10% school absenteeism due to Influenza-like illness).

- Monitor daily attendance with the Influenza Reporting Log.
- Have teachers 'check' students during the first hour of school for Influenza-like symptoms.
- Send home student/staff who display Influenza-like symptoms.

Intensive Surveillance

High numbers of Influenza-like illnesses are reported in the Calgary Health Region (10% or greater school absenteeism due to Influenza-like illness).

- Monitor daily attendance with the Influenza Reporting Log.
- Send daily absence reports to the School Health Nurse/CHR Communicable Disease Unit.
- Continue morning 'Influenza check'.
- Send home students/staff who display Influenza-like symptoms.
- Begin preparations for potential school closure.



Background

There is an extraordinary amount of information published regarding Pandemic Planning. This information should foster a basic understanding of pandemic influenza and allow planning and preparation to unfold in a more informed manner

Key Questions

The following “Q &A’s” build understanding of the unique characteristics of pandemic influenza, a potentially virulent disease.

What is a pandemic influenza?

Pandemic influenza is a type of influenza that occurs every few decades and spreads quickly, affecting most countries and regions around the world.

Unlike the “ordinary” influenza that usually occurs every winter in Canada, pandemic influenza can occur at any time of the year.

Influenza pandemics have occurred for centuries-three times in the last one hundred years and resulted in many deaths.

Experts predict another pandemic, but cannot say exactly when it will happen. When it does, it may come two or more “waves”, several months apart. Each wave may last two to three months.

Pandemic influenza is much more serious than the "ordinary" influenza. At least a quarter of the population may be affected.

Pandemic influenza is likely to cause the same symptoms as the "ordinary" influenza. However, the symptoms may be more severe because nobody will have any immunity or protection against that particular virus.

A serious pandemic is also likely to cause many deaths, disrupt the daily life of many people and cause intense pressure on healthcare and other services.

Every pandemic is different, and until the virus starts circulating, it is impossible to predict its full effects.

What causes a pandemic influenza?

Pandemics of influenza happen when a new influenza virus, which is very different from the commonly circulating strains, appears. Because it is a new virus, few-if any-people have any immunity. This allows the new virus to spread widely, easily and to cause more serious illness.

Who is at risk?

Once a pandemic influenza starts, everybody will be at risk of getting pandemic influenza. Certain groups may be at greater risk than others.

Experts predict anywhere between 2 million and 50 million deaths around the world. The *Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan* assumes that about a quarter of the population will be affected; with an estimated 11,000 to 58,000 deaths.

Is there a vaccine to protect against pandemic influenza?

There is no vaccine ready to protect against pandemic influenza. The virus that causes pandemic influenza will be new and a vaccine to protect against it cannot be made until the virus has been identified. Vaccines used for “ordinary” influenza will not give any protection. These vaccines will continue to protect against common influenza which may also cause illness during the same time.

Medicines called antivirals may be used to treat pandemic influenza. However, until the pandemic virus is circulating, we won't know how well the antivirals will work.

How does influenza spread?

Influenza viruses are easily passed from person to person to through direct or indirect contact. You can catch influenza through breathing in air containing droplets or aerosols containing the virus produced when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. You can also catch it through touching an infected person or surface contaminated with the virus, and then touching your face.

Are there different types of influenza viruses?

Influenza viruses are divided into three main groups: influenza A, B and C. Type A viruses are the source of most seasonal flu epidemics and have caused all previous pandemics. Whereas influenza B and C viruses infect humans only, influenza A viruses also infects birds and other animals such as pigs and horses. This ability to jump the species barrier enables influenza A viruses to cause pandemics.

What do we know about pandemic influenza?

We know that pandemic influenza viruses spread quickly. During the pandemics of 1957 and 1968, the viruses took only three to four months to spread from Southeast Asia where they were first identified, to Europe and North America.

The intercontinental spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 was even faster. Within four months of the global alert, more than 8,000 people had been affected in 30 countries across six continents, and 900 people had died.

Air travel hastens the spread of pandemic influenza. Even with good planning and preparation, the consequences of pandemic influenza will still be very serious.

What are the differences between pandemic influenza and “ordinary” influenza? There are important differences between “ordinary” and pandemic influenza. Epidemics of “ordinary” influenza occur every year around the world. An epidemic is a widespread outbreak of disease in a single community, population or region. A pandemic spreads around the world affecting many hundreds of thousands of people across many countries.

What are the key features of pandemic influenza?

For an influenza virus to be capable of causing a pandemic, it must be able to:

- Infect people (not just mammals and birds)
- Cause illness in a high number of those infected
- Spread easily from person to person
- Spread widely because the virus is significantly different from previously circulating strains and most people will have little or no immunity.

Previous influenza pandemics had all these features.

(Taken from the Calgary Health Region's "Quick Facts about Pandemic Influenza")

Key Assumptions

Key assumptions, taken from the Canada's Public Health Agency's *Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan* form the foundation for planning. Reviewing these assumptions will provide a basis for understanding the nature of the conditions and challenges likely to be faced during a pandemic outbreak.

Origin and Timing

- The next pandemic will first emerge outside of Canada'
- The next pandemic virus will be present in Canada within 3 months after it emerges from another part of the world.
- The first peak of illness in Canada could occur within 2 to 4 months after the virus arrives in Canada.
- A pandemic wave will sweep across Canada in 1-2 months affecting multiple locations simultaneously.
- The influenza pandemic will occur in two or more waves. In any locality, the length of each wave of illness will be 6 to 8 weeks. The pandemic will last 12 to 18 months and more than wave may occur within a 12-month period.

Epidemiology

- The incubation period, period of communicability and method of transmission for the novel strain will be consistent with other known human influenza strains, that is:
 1. Incubation period: 1 to 3 days;
 2. Period of communicability: 24 hours before and up to 5 days after onset of illness;
 3. Method of transmission: large droplet and contact (direct and indirect);
- The novel virus will be transmitted efficiently from person to person resulting in large numbers of people being infected, since there will be no significant immunity to the new virus on a population basis.

Impact

- The majority of the population (over 70%) will be infected over the course of the pandemic, but only 15-35% of the population will become clinically ill.
- For planning purposes assume that the majority of cases will occur in the first wave.
 1. If the overall clinical attack rate is 35%; assume that 25% of the population will be clinically ill in the first wave.
- For a pandemic of mild to moderate severity (i.e., consistent with the last 2 pandemics and in the absence of any interventions (e.g., vaccine, antiviral), of those who are clinically ill:
 1. up to 50% will seek outpatient care;
 2. 1% will be hospitalized and recover;
 3. 0.4% will be fatal cases."
- For a severe pandemic and in the absence of any intervention of those who are clinically ill, up to 10% may be hospitalized and 2% may die.

Absenteeism

- During an outbreak in a specific area, it would be appropriate for employers to plan for a total workplace absenteeism rate of between 20% and 25% during the peak two week period with lower rates in the preceding and subsequent weeks.
- Small work units in which employees engage in a high degree of social interaction could expect higher peak absenteeism rates than larger units with less social interaction.

(from the Public Health Agency of Canada's "Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan")

Conclusion

An outbreak of pandemic influenza, should it occur, will have an extremely dramatic and widespread impact.

1. A pandemic outbreak would not be a short event with recovery occurring fairly quickly. It is more likely that an outbreak of pandemic influenza would last for a significant period of time.
2. The pandemic virus is likely to be extremely virulent and should lead to very rapid disease transmission.
3. Given the rapidity with which the virus is likely to spread and the multiple and simultaneous outbreaks likely to occur, there will be little or virtually no warning of the pandemic outbreak.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Superintendent and Principal would serve as the pandemic response co-coordinators during the crisis. This would include three major responsibilities:

- All major decisions including school closures, or the Medical Officer of Health as part of a public health measure.
- All communications with the media regarding CGCS.
- Ongoing communication with the Chair.

Considerations for Pandemic Co-Managers

1. Provide information to staff regarding school closures.
2. Provide information to staff re: short or long term disability leave.
3. Reallocation of staff as necessary to maintain an open school.
4. Designate responsibilities to maintain services and operations when other designated employees are unable to do so.
5. Plan for an interruption in contracted busing services.
6. Communicate any Alberta Education initiatives regarding educational services to students pending a prolonged school closure.
7. Plan for the dissemination of information to all CGCS staff who are absent from work or when school is closed.
8. Plans for the dissemination of information to all CGCS families and Board of Directors.
9. Institute a plan that provides for the CGCS web page to be maintained throughout pandemic.
10. Designate an acting principal in the event the principal is unavailable.

Important Resources

Calgary Health Region: www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/pandemic

Health Link Alberta: www.healthlinkalberta.ca

Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)

Calgary 311 (City Information)

Calgary 211 (Mental Health and Social Services)

Alberta Health and Wellness:

www.healthtest.gov.ab.ca/influenza/Pandemic.html

Web Site Links

Alberta Health and Wellness:

www.healthtest.gov.ab.ca/influenza/Pandemic.html

Health Canada: <http://www.phac->

[aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemice.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemice.html) Public Health Agency Canada Flu

Watch:

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/flu_watch/index.html

Contra Costa Health Services: <http://www.cchealth.org>

World Health Organization: www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/index.htmllest