

School District No. 85 (Vancouver Island North)



Pandemic Response Plan

**For a copy of the School Flu-Absenteeism Reporting Form and relevant attachment
– please see the last two pages of this publication**

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Pandemic Response Plan

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) has determined the H1N1 virus is a pandemic. At this time, WHO considers the overall severity of the influenza pandemic as moderate. Based on experience from the Southern Hemisphere, Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) expects the spread of H1N1 to increase rapidly during the fall, 2009.

Contingency planning is essential for an effective response.

This plan has been developed in response to the anticipated fall 2009 outbreak of H1N1 and is applicable within the context of a pandemic influenza. However, the plan is intended to guide planning and action through any pandemic, regardless of the trigger.

Pandemic Planning Committee/Emergency Response Team

A committee has been formed under the direction of the Superintendent of Schools to plan for continuity of services and instruction and effective decision making in the event of a pandemic. This plan also addresses the important topics of infection control and mitigation.

If a pandemic occurs, the roles of the members will shift from planning to emergency response. Members of the committee, with areas of responsibility, are:

Superintendent of Schools/CEO	Overall planning, communicating with Board of Education, Public Health/VIHA, Ministry of Education, and media.
Director of Instruction	Continuity of student learning; separation, supervision and transportation of sick students
Secretary Treasurer	Employee work policies; FOIPOP concerns
Manager of Operations and Maintenance	Infection control, janitorial and transportation services
Executive Assistant to Sup't/Board	Communicating with schools, maintaining school district website
Administrative Assistant, Maintenance	Coordinating Health and Safety measures
District Principal of First Nations and Early Learning Programs	Communicating with Band Schools, StrongStart Centres and On-site Daycares
District Principal of Special Services	Special Considerations

Each team member will have someone on the team designated to take on their responsibilities should he or she become ill.

Schools and workplaces should have Emergency Response Teams in place, with a designated contact to work with the District Team. Many of the actions in this plan will be tasked to school principals and site managers.

What is an Influenza Pandemic?

- A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak due to the spread of a new virus.
- Pandemics can happen when the influenza mixes or changes to result in a new virus.
- This new virus is capable of person-to-person spread because most people have little or no immunity to it.
- Influenza causes outbreaks each winter. The very young and the very old usually have the most severe illness.
- Influenza pandemics cause more illness and more serious outcomes like hospitalization and death affecting all age groups, including young adults. This is different from usual influenza.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Influenza?

▪ Fever	▪ Cough	▪ Sore Throat
▪ Runny nose	▪ Headache	▪ Muscle aches and pains
▪ Chills	▪ Extreme fatigue	
▪ May include diarrhea and vomiting (especially in children)		

What is the Infectious Stage of Influenza?

The infectious period for people infected with the novel H1N1 virus is for one day before and up to 7 days after symptom onset. For those with severe disease requiring hospitalization viral shedding and infectiousness can be longer.

Note: Call **HealthLink B.C.** at **8-1-1**, 24 hours/day, seven days/week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or if you are feeling ill.

Precautions for Everyone to Take:

What can you and your family do to minimize the chance of coming into contact with the agent that causes the pandemic influenza?

1. Wash hands often. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers.
2. Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing or cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Wash hands after you cough or sneeze.
3. Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth. A person can become ill by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
4. If you or a family member becomes sick with flu like symptoms, stay at home, get plenty of rest and contact a health care provider as needed.

5. Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, eat nutritious foods and avoid smoking which may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.

What can you do to ensure your family is prepared in case you get sick?

1. Food

Have a minimum 2 week supply of non-perishable, easy to prepare food taking into consideration your family situation which may include food for infants and special nutritional needs.

2. Pets

- a. Have a 2-week supply of available food and medication

3. Medical

- a. Have extra prescription and non-prescription drugs and supplies
- b. Store health/cleaning supplies in an easily accessible location

4. **Talk** to your family about how they would be cared for if they get sick

5. **Find** out now about your child's school/day-care plan in the event of an influenza outbreak.

Hand Washing Education

Washing your hands properly consists of the following steps:

1. Remove jewelry and watches from fingers and wrists.
2. Wet hands under warm running water.
3. Apply soap and rub hands together for 10 seconds to produce lather.
4. Wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, between fingers and thumbs, and under finger nails, for 20 seconds.
5. Rinse hands with fingers pointing downward.
6. Dry hands with a clean or disposable towel.
7. Turn off the water with the same towel used to dry your hands. Do not turn off the taps with solely your hands as this will only re-contaminate them.
8. If single use, dispose of the towel in the nearest waste basket.

Sanitizing your hands with an alcohol based sanitizer (≥60% alcohol) consists of the following steps:

1. Remove jewelry and watches from your fingers and wrists.
2. Apply an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to your hands.
3. Rub all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, between fingers.

School Closures

Widespread school closures are not being recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada at this time as an effective way of managing the spread of this illness.

The US Centre for Disease Control acknowledges that the potential benefits of school closures in the spring of 2009 were outweighed by negative consequences, including students being left home alone, health workers missing shifts to stay home with their children, and students' education being interrupted.

Based on this guidance and information about the current H1N1, public health officials in B.C. do not anticipate that closures of individual schools will be useful for controlling the transmission and impact of H1N1. However, local exceptions may arise which could result in closures on a case by case basis.

Pandemic Response Plan

This plan addresses what needs to be done to increase awareness and prevention of widespread infections through education (Pre-pandemic Stage), how we will manage an outbreak should one occur (Pandemic Stage), and considerations for returning to normal, should we experience an outbreak (Post-pandemic Stage).

These phases, described below, are from the *Vancouver Island Health Authority Pandemic Influenza Plan*.

1. ***Pre-pandemic Phase:*** This is the critical phase for pandemic preparedness. The pre-pandemic phase is now, and planning efforts need to focus on education, business continuity, infection control, and ongoing communications with students, parents, staff, and the medical health officer.
2. ***Pandemic Phase:*** The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) will declare when it is time to activate plans for the pandemic phase. We cannot anticipate exactly what will happen. Plans will need to be adapted to reflect circumstances and situations as they arise.

During this phase, the key goals will be to:

- Minimize illness and suffering, morbidity and mortality.
- Minimize educational and business disruptions.

3. ***Post-pandemic Phase:*** The post-pandemic phase begins when the Provincial Health Officer declares that the influenza pandemic is over. The primary focus of work at this time is to restore normal services, deactivate pandemic response activities, review their impact, and use the lessons learned to guide future planning activities.

Communications Plan

The Communications Plan will be followed to distribute information at all three stages of the Pandemic Response Plan. Everyone responsible for communicating with others needs to ensure they have readily-available, correct contact information.

From:	To:
Regional Medical Health Officer or Ministry of Education	Superintendent of Schools <i>[report to Medical Health Officer flu absenteeism greater than 10%]</i>
Superintendent of Schools	Emergency Response Team Schools <i>[Principals report to Superintendent flu absenteeism greater than 10%]</i> Unions DPAC Media
Manager of Operations and Maintenance	Schools
Principals / Managers	Staff and Parents
Teachers	Students
District Principal, First Nations and Early Learning Programs	Band Schools StrongStart Centres On-site Daycares
District Principal, Special Programs	Ministry of Children and Family Development Community Agencies

Continuity of Instruction

The Director of Instruction, in consultation with the school principal, will develop an alternative procedure to ensure continuity of student learning. This will be determined by the level of student absence and the level of school closure. Options include:

- use of Hospital Homebound Teacher to work with individual students with prolonged absences.
- teachers providing work packages for students with prolonged absences.
- teachers providing work packages for the students in the class in the event of a “school closure” that permits staff to come to work.
- if teaching staff is not permitted to be in the “closed school” use of correspondence courses, E-bus, NIDES for grade 10, 11, and 12 students registered in courses with provincial exams.
- exam deferrals for provincial exams.

Options to consider in the event of staff illness:

- use of certified and non-certified teachers on call.
- re-assignment of internal teaching staff and combining partially full classes.
- use of non-enrolling staff to cover classrooms.
- use of district helping teachers to cover classrooms.
- moving students to other schools for supervision
- moving staff in from other schools for supervision

Continuity of Core Operations

Principals and Managers are responsible for ensuring, as much as possible, the continuity of operations at their schools or work sites, should there be widespread employee absenteeism. This should be addressed in the Pre-Pandemic Stage by putting in place cross training plans for essential services.

Transportation Services

School District #85 maintains a list of qualified, temporary bus drivers for all current bus routes. In the event of bus driver absences due to a pandemic, the transportation department will do its utmost to continue regularly scheduled bus services to students.

The Transportation Department will continue to advertise for and train temporary bus drivers. This involves a criminal record check, driver's abstract and training on the regular routes.

It may be necessary to remove a driver from a scheduled field trip in order to serve a regular route. This would amount to cancellation of the field trip.

Regular bus drivers may be asked to incorporate stops from another bus route into their own.

If our human resources have been exhausted and no bus drivers are available to work a regular bus route, it may be necessary to cancel the route. As much advance notice as possible will be given to parents and students. In the event of cancellation of or change to a bus route:

- The cancellation or change will be announced on The Port – the North Island local radio station – at 1240 am, on CBC at 95.5 FM and on School District #85's website. Parents may be advised to find an alternative means of transportation for the student until further notice or to call the Transportation Department at 949-8155.
- The Transportation Department will, if possible, aid parents and schools in putting together car-pooling for students. Persons using vehicles to transport students who would normally ride the bus may be eligible for compensation for mileage through the School District #85 Transportation Assistance plan.
- Schools will be notified immediately of any changes to regular service or scheduled field trips.

Janitorial Services - Custodial Staff

School District #85 maintains a list of qualified, temporary custodians for all schools. In the event of custodial absences due to a pandemic, the maintenance department will do its utmost to continue regularly scheduled custodial service to schools.

The Maintenance Department will continue to advertise for and train temporary custodians. This involves a criminal record check, completion of the WHMIS program, new employee's orientation program and on-site training.

Work schedules for regular custodians may be altered to best meet the needs of the schools and students.

Cleaning Practices - Overview

During a pandemic, schools need to be cleaned more thoroughly to minimize the spread of the virus. This applies particularly to hard surfaces (for example, sinks, handles, railings, objects and counters). Influenza viruses may live up to two days on hard surfaces.

Influenza viruses are inactivated by alcohol and by chlorine. Cleaning of surfaces with a neutral detergent followed by a disinfectant solution is recommended. Surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned often, preferably daily.

- Hygiene practices should be elevated in a pandemic to an even higher level than usual.
- Remind staff and students not to share cups, dishes and cutlery; and ensure these items are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after use.
- Remove books, magazines and papers from common areas.
- Consider ways of cleaning and/or restricting communal use of some play, physical education equipment and office equipment.
- When a person with suspected influenza is identified and has left the school, it is important that their work area or office and any other known places they have been are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Planning should identify the basic hygiene practices (including hand hygiene) to be followed by cleaners, protocols for the use of personal protection equipment and methods for waste disposal.

Contingency plans and training for custodians (e.g. for cleaning and disinfecting classrooms, increasing the supply of paper towels) will occur in the planning stage. During the active phase, the quality and, if necessary, frequency of school cleaning may be increased, including:

General School Cleaning

Suitable cleaning products (see end of this document) should be applied to all hard surfaces in common areas daily:

- Student and staff member desks and tables
- Counters, railings
- Stairwells
- Doors, door handles and push plates
- Light switches
- Sinks, toilet bowls and urinals
- Kitchen surfaces including counter tops, taps, and the handles of microwaves, stoves and fridges
- Shared telephones and keyboards in common areas e.g. main office, staff room, library, computer rooms

Keyboards and Telephones

Keyboards and telephones should not be shared if at all possible. In situations where they are, they should be cleaned between users, by the users themselves, with appropriate anti-bacterial cleaning products.

Office staff members should have their own headset/handset, keyboard and mouse. These should be cleaned at the beginning and end of each shift, and stored in a plastic bag labelled with the person's name between shifts.

Kitchen Hygiene/Break-out Area Hygiene

Tea towels are to be removed from all kitchens. Disposable paper towels, in a suitable dispenser, are to be provided in staff kitchens for drying of hands, and drying of dishes where required. The custodian should provide for an adequate supply of paper towels at all times.

Students and staff should be reminded not to share cups, dishes, and cutlery and ensure they are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after use, or preferably, washed in a dishwasher.

Where dishwashers are available, these are to be used in preference to hand washing dishes. Dishwashers should be set on the hotter water temperature setting if that choice is available.

Plain soap is to be provided in kitchens for hand washing before and after food preparation.

All magazines/papers are to be removed from reception/waiting areas, and from common areas such as kitchens, staff rooms, common rooms and breakout areas.

Bathroom Hygiene

Plain liquid soap should be provided in all bathrooms/toilets in preference to bar soap.

Cleaning Equipment and Supplies

Custodians

- Routine cleaning solutions, disinfectant and household bleach
- Personal protective equipment for cleaners including gloves, eye shields and respirators for use if required
- Increased stocks of paper towels and liquid soap
- Additional supplies of plastic garbage bags
- Plain liquid soaps

Student and Staff Use

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use in emergency cleaning – gloves, eye shields, face masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Tissues
- Keyboard wipes

Employee Work Policies

Employees are required to stay away from the workplace if they are ill during a pandemic. If possible, employees should notify their supervisor by telephone of their absence each day along with an update on their condition. In a pandemic, supervisors may waive the requirement for employees to produce a doctor's certificate. Employees should telephone or email payroll staff if they are seeking information about sick leave or other pay loss entitlements that may be available.

If an employee has cause to be absent due to factors such as family illness, social distancing recommendations from public health, and/or public transportation disruptions, any relevant provisions of the employee's collective agreement or contract of employment will apply.

In the event of a school closure during a pandemic, the provisions of the School Closure Protocol (*September 2008*) will apply.

Separation, Supervision and Transportation of Sick Students

Sick students and staff should always be required to stay at home. Students and staff who appear to have influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the day must be promptly separated from other students and staff and sent home.

Schools should regularly update contact information for parents so that they can be contacted more easily if they need to pick up their ill child.

Schools should designate a location for a sick room. This room should not be commonly used for other purposes or be a space through which others regularly pass.

A staff member should be designated to supervise the ill person until they can be picked up or they can be transported to the ferry. These staff members should not be pregnant or have chronic illnesses which increase the risk of influenza complications and they should be familiar with

infection control recommendations. They should wear personal protective equipment such as surgical masks and gloves only when in close proximity to an ill and coughing individual. The masks and gloves are one time use and not meant to remain on an individual for extended periods of time or between caring for different individuals. Masks should be the exception in the school setting.

When the student is transported to the ferry the school personnel should liaise with ferry officials to ensure there is an isolated area on the vessel.

Reporting Elevated Absenteeism and Outbreaks [[School Reporting Form – last page of document](#)]

The Superintendents' office will be responsible for communicating with the Vancouver Island Health Authority when influenza-related absenteeism at an individual school exceeds 10% from baseline of the student population.

Schools are asked to report absenteeism-related influenza on the "School Absenteeism Reporting Form" [*prepared by the Vancouver Island Health Authority and provided to schools*] by faxing it to the Superintendent of Schools. The school's report will immediately be faxed to the Courtenay Health Authority. (Fax: 250-334-5467)

Personal Information:

Personal Information - Employees:

If employees fall ill during a pandemic, the following protocol will apply to the disclosure of employees' personal medical information.

In the event that a supervisor becomes aware that an employee has been diagnosed with H1N1 Influenza, the Superintendent's approval must be obtained before any personal information is disclosed to another person, unless the express consent of the employee is obtained. Prior to exercising discretion under Sections 25 and 33.1 (m) of the FOIPPA, the Superintendent will:

- (a) ensure the facts of the individual circumstance are accurate,
- (b) consult with the Secretary Treasurer (FOIPOP coordinator), and
- (c) consult with the Provincial Health Officer if there is any doubt whether the circumstances of the situation indicate a need to protect the public interest.

In situations where information is released regarding the diagnosis of a case of H1N1 influenza, the Superintendent will work with public health officials to ensure effective hygiene practices are put in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

Personal Information - Students

School districts have the responsibility to share information about students' health status to people planning or delivering health or social services.

Special Considerations - Special Needs Students:

Some students have medical conditions that will become complicated if they contract an infection. Others lack the skills necessary to take basic precautions like washing their hands. These students require special consideration in planning for a pandemic.

1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a list of people at high risk for complications from H1N1 (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/highrisk.htm>). (Note- the asterisk mark (*) and underlined words in the list below denote a link to pertinent information re that condition and H1N1 on the CDC website that can be accessed by viewing the district's Pandemic Plan on the SD85 website at www.sd85.bc.ca.)

The list includes those who have:

- Cancer
 - Blood disorders (including sickle cell disease)
 - Chronic lung disease such as asthma *<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/asthma.htm> or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
 - Diabetes * <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/>
 - Heart disease * <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/heart.htm>
 - Kidney disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - Neurological disorders (such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, brain or spinal cord injuries, moderate to profound intellectual disability, mental retardation or developmental delay)
 - Neuromuscular disorders (such as muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis)
 - Weakened immune systems (such as people with HIV or AIDS * http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/hiv_flu.htm or who are on medications that weaken the immune system)
2. In cooperation with staff and with reference to the list of relevant medical conditions, the school principal will compile and maintain a list of students believed to be at high risk for complications. **Once a principal is aware that students or staff are absent because of influenza like illness (ILI), the principal (or designate) will contact the parents of students on the list to ensure that they are aware that their child may be at high risk because of their medical condition.** The principal will not offer any medical advice but ask parents to ensure their child follow the *Precautions for Everyone to Take* as listed on page 4 of this document and monitor their child's health closely. In some cases, the principal may advise the parent to seek medical advice. The principal should use the attached form to list at risk students and record relevant details of conversations with the parent.
 3. Students who lack the basic skills to take the *Precautions for Everyone to Take* will typically be students already identified as having Special Needs and hygiene may already be a part of their IEP. Special Needs Case Managers should ensure that all students on their caseload are taught these skills if necessary. Teachers of younger students should teach the *Precautions for Everyone to Take*.

Healthy Schools / Lunch / Breakfast and Lunch Programs:

1. No sharing of food. Workers must wear gloves to handle food. Counter and table tops need to be cleaned and thoroughly before and after food is served.

On-Site Daycares, StrongStart Centres:

1. Operators of these facilities in our schools are expected to implement the procedures contained in this plan. The District Principal of Early Learning is their school district liaison during all three phases of this plan.

Other Activities taking place in the school building:

1. The Administrative Assistant to the Manager of Operations and Maintenance will be responsible for communicating school district plans and procedures to outside groups who use our buildings. There is the possibility that outside use of our facilities will be curtailed during the pandemic phase.

Planning for School-based vaccination programs – should schools be used as settings for vaccinations

1. Public Health will communicate with the Superintendent of Schools if/when this is to occur. The Superintendent's Office will communicate with Principals, who will facilitate this at the school level.

Recovery or Post-Pandemic Phase

If schools have been disrupted or closed, our goal is to have classes and activities return to normal in an orderly fashion, while ensuring that infection does not re-occur.

The Emergency Response Team will continue to work closely with the Medical Health Officer, VIHA, Ministry of Education and local officials during this phase.

If schools have been closed, a process for reopening them will be the responsibility of the Emergency Response Team and Principals.

Communication about 'return to normal' plans to the schools will be the responsibility of the Superintendent's office. Communication about the 'Post Pandemic Phase' to the public will be via the SD85 website and the media. Communication to staffs, students and parents will be the responsibility of the principals.

Depending on staffing shortages, classes may need to be combined and bus routes may need to be adjusted until we have returned to normal.

As some people will continue to be infectious for up to three days after their symptoms are gone, infection control practices, procedures and reminders will need to continue at all work sites in case people return to school or work too early.

In the event there have been deaths among students and/or staff, the District Principal of Special Services and school principals should prepare for Critical Incident Response.

Once the school district has returned to normal, the Emergency Response Team should deactivate pandemic response activities, review their impact and use the lesson learned to guide future planning activities.



**SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM REPORTING FORM
VANCOUVER ISLAND HEALTH AUTHORITY**

Completion of this form will help the Vancouver Island Health Authority monitor for pandemic influenza.

HOW TO USE THIS FORM

- This form is to be completed by the school principal or designate on each day when, in his/her opinion, the school absenteeism rate is significantly increased. A guideline for determining 'significantly increased' is approximately 10% above the normal rate of absenteeism for time of year.
- Absenteeism for reasons other than illness are not reportable e.g. school trips
- If reasons for absenteeism are unknown, please make an attempt to investigate so you are able to provide this information.

Please Fax Completed Form (with attachment, if relevant) to:

**The Superintendent of Schools, SD85
Fax: 250-949-8792**



Superintendent's office to fax to:

**Vancouver Island Health Authority (Courtenay)
Fax: 250-334-5467**

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Name of School: _____ **City/Town:** _____

Contact Person: _____ **Tel Number: (250)** _____

Students Enrolled: _____ **# Students Absent Due To Illness** _____

Date of Elevated Absenteeism: (da/mo/yr)

PLEASE TICK REASONS FOR ABSENTEEISM

Fever Cough Runny/Stuffy Nose Sore Throat Fatigue Headache

Diarrhea, Vomiting or Nausea Shortness of Breath/Breathing Difficulties

Sore Muscles &/or Joints Not Related To Injury

Hospital Admission Related to Breathing Difficulties Hospital Admission Other

Other Symptoms _____

