

# **School District 85**

## **(Vancouver Island North)**



# **Pandemic Response Plan**

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# Pandemic Response Plan

## Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) has determined the COVID-19 virus is a pandemic. The new coronavirus is a virus (type of germ) that causes lung infections in people. The disease is called COVID-19.

Contingency planning is essential for an effective response.

This plan has been developed in response to the H1N1 outbreak in 2009 and updated March 13, 2020 with the COVID-19 outbreak 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:

<b>Superintendent of Schools/CEO</b>	Overall planning, communicating with Board of Education, Public Health/VIHA, Ministry of Education, and media.
<b>Assistant Superintendent</b>	Continuity of student learning; separation, supervision and transportation of sick students
<b>Secretary Treasurer</b>	Employee work policies; FOIPOP concerns
<b>Manager of Operations and Maintenance</b>	Infection control, janitorial and transportation services
<b>Executive Assistant to Sup't/Board</b>	Communicating with schools, maintaining school district website
<b>Administrative Assistant, Maintenance</b>	Coordinating Health and Safety measures
<b>District Principal of First Nations and Early Learning Programs</b>	Communicating with Band Schools, StrongStart Centres and On-site Daycares
<b>Assistant Superintendent</b>	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
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Chills
- Extreme Fatigue
- Muscle aches and Pains
- *May include diarrhea and vomiting (especially in children)*

### What are the Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19?

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Shortness of Breath

**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 COVID-19?

- Wash hands often.
- When soap and water are not available, use alcohol based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers.
- 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.
- Avoid touching your face. A person can become ill by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

- If you or a family member becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms, stay at home and self-isolate. This means you do not have visitors and you do not go to work, school, public areas, including places of worship, stores, shopping malls and restaurants. For more information on self-isolation please visit [BC Centre for Disease Control Self-Isolation](#).
- 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?

**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.

**Pets** - Have a 2-week supply of available food and medication

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

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

**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:

- Remove jewelry and watches from fingers and wrists.
- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Apply soap and rub hands together for 10 seconds to produce lather.
- Wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, between fingers and thumbs, and under finger nails, for 20 seconds.
- Rinse hands with fingers pointing downward.
- Dry hands with a clean or disposable towel.
- 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.
- 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:

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

## School Closures

1. The Provincial Health Officer will direct the province when it is time to activate pandemic plans. The Medical Health Office for Island Health Authority will direct the District if closure of specific district site(s) is/are required. If, to minimize the spread of infection, activation of these plans to include school closures, the Medical Health Officer will advise the Superintendent of Schools.

**OR**

2. The Ministry of Education can direct that school closures occur to reduce the spread of infection in the school population or for other public health reasons.

**Example: A student or staff member has tested positive for the pandemic virus:**

1. CDC informs the Provincial Health Officer and Medical Health Officer (MHO)
2. MHO Informs the Superintendent of Schools
3. Superintendent of Schools informs the Ministry of Education
4. The Superintendent of Schools, in consultation with the MHO, the Ministry of Education and the school principal, will determine whether the school should be closed, based on criteria established by the Ministry of Education.

## 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).

### Phases

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>
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
Assistant Superintendent	Ministry of Children and Family Development Community Agencies

## Continuity of Instruction

The Assistant Superintendent, 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:

- 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.

### 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 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

The Superintendents' office is 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.

School Administration are asked to notify the Superintendent and report absenteeism-related influenza on the form provided at the following link for 'School Absenteeism' [School Absenteeism Reporting](#).

## 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 COVID-19 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:

- ensure the facts of the individual circumstance are accurate,
- consult with the Secretary Treasurer (FOIPOP coordinator), and
- 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 COVID-19 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 COVID-19 ([COVID-19 high risk](#))

The list includes:

- Older adults
  - People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
    - \* Heart Disease
    - \* Diabetes
    - \* Lung Disease
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:**

- 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:**

- 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:**

- 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**

- 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.