

# **Pandemic Influenza**

**Pandemic Response Planning Checklist  
for Early Learning and Child Care**

In the event of an influenza pandemic, child care facilities will play an important role in the protection of the health and safety of children and their families as well as staff. Adapt this checklist to address the specific needs and supports in your community.

### Planning and Coordination

- Form a Pandemic Coordination Team to produce a plan. Include members from different groups your program serves and stakeholders involved in the operation of the program. Form cohorts with other facilities.
- Assign one member of the team to identify reliable sources of information and to monitor the latest news and public health warnings and advisements.
- Identify the lines of authority, municipal and provincial contacts including your public health contact and your child care coordinator and reporting mechanisms to authorities empowered by enacted legislation.
- Make sure your plan is in line with other plans in your community and with authorizing government agency plans (through your child care coordinator).
- Develop your action plan for business continuity from staffing through to supplies anticipating every eventuality.
- Inform families of the plan and encourage them to consider what they will do in the eventuality of a pandemic threat. What is their plan for care?
- Learn about resources and supports that are or will be available in your community so that you can inform families in need of assistance such as low income families or families who do not speak English, etc.
- Share your plan with others and look for ways to evaluate and produce stronger plans by pooling resources, sharing information etc.

### Program Operations and Administration

- Compile a list of substitute caregivers who will commit to work if needed. Draw from a number of sources including the boards, parent volunteers, existing substitutes, previous employees etc. Make sure all individuals on the list have completed an Investigation Authorization form, including the Criminal Records Check and the Child Abuse Registry Check.
- Develop a written plan for keeping in touch with staff members, substitute staff, families, your child care coordinator and other important contacts.
- Plan how you will deal with altered program delivery, staff absences and children's absences that would occur during a flu pandemic.
- Plan ways to continue basic functions if your program is closed or operations are decreased significantly. (For example, continue meeting payroll, continue receiving subsidies and grants, collect fees if service is provided, etc.)
- In the case of prolonged children's absences, plan ways to keep in contact with families and ways families can be helped or supported at home in the care of their children. Keep an updated list of referral agencies and contacts.
- Keep a current contact list of suppliers and service providers. Find out what their plans for business continuity are in the case of a flu pandemic.
- Budget to provide an emergency supply of items that may be difficult to get during a pandemic.
- Cross-train staff and develop written instructions for essential tasks, keep a record of the location of important items and key information. For example: keys, passwords, control panels, etc.

## Communications Planning

- In your contact and resource list include several different methods for contacting people. (For example, you might use hotlines, telephone and email trees, text messaging, special Websites, local radio and/or TV stations.) Test your contact methods to be sure they work.
- When you have completed your flu pandemic plan, make sure it is presented to all staff and families. Make sure they understand why a plan is needed. Give them opportunities to ask questions and make comments.
- Devote a space on your parent information bulletin board for articles, information and updates on a flu pandemic. Search for reliable internet sources of current information. Reduce incidences of anxiety, rumour, panic and misinformation.
- Provide families with information on such issues as infection control, exclusion policies, signs and symptoms, self care and care of ill family member etc.
- Begin to identify resources to help staff and children deal with grief and loss.
- Keep your child care coordinator informed of your progress and ask for assistance when needed.

## Infection Control Policies and Actions

- Ensure that *Infection Control Guidelines for Early Learning and Child Care Facilities* (available at [manitoba.ca/childcare](http://manitoba.ca/childcare)) is reviewed with all staff members. Ensure staff are aware to consistently use proper routine health practices and to increase monitoring of children's hand washing.
- Ensure that *Healthy Routine Practices* posters are prominently posted in appropriate areas (available at [manitoba.ca/childcare](http://manitoba.ca/childcare))
- Develop child exclusion and staff-leave policies that are non-punitive so that the ill person can stay home and only return when fully recovered. The staff person who has recovered is resistant to the disease and will be an asset to the program.
- Keep a good supply of things you will need to help control the spread of infection. For example, keep on hand plenty of soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, disinfectants, etc.
- Teach staff and families how to limit the spread of infection generally and on an on-going basis. Develop a schedule to increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing of surfaces and toys during a pandemic.
- Teach staff a standard set of steps for checking children daily for signs and symptoms of illness during a flu pandemic. Your public health nurse (PHN) will help with this procedure.
- Arrange for a place where ill children and staff can be isolated until they leave the facility. Ensure a supply of fresh personal items is available, example, bedding, towels, etc.
- Inform families that experts recommend yearly flu shots for all children 6 months to two years of age and anyone who cares for children in that age range. Find out where the nearest flu shot service will be in your area during a flu pandemic.
- Encourage staff to get annual flu shots.
- Keep accurate records for reporting of absenteeism due to illness (staff and children) including the symptoms of their illness.

For more information contact:  
**Child Care Information Services**  
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**1-888-213-4754 toll-free**