

Peoples Christian Academy

PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN



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DEFINITION OF PANDEMIC

Background

A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of the flu. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts the occurrence of the next pandemic is just a matter of time. The exact nature of a pandemic virus and illness cannot be known until it has emerged.

For example, in 2003 more than 100 people died worldwide of Avian Influenza, also known as the H5N1 virus or “bird flu”. Most human cases were linked to contact with sick birds. More recently, cases of Swine Influenza, also known as the H1N1 virus, have been reported in Mexico as well as other countries including Canada. Swine flu is a variant of seasonal influenza and contains parts of flu viruses from birds, pigs and humans. In preparation all levels of government have created Pandemic Preparedness Plans.

In the event of a pandemic, Peoples Christian Academy will follow the advice of Toronto Public Health including direction regarding the closure of schools.

PANDEMIC PHASES

Health professionals have determined 4 major phases of a potential pandemic. These will be used in this document and will be used by health professionals, and provincial and federal authorities to describe Pandemic phases. PCA staff should familiarize themselves with this language and be prepared to respond to individual phases.

Pandemic Phase	Definition
Interpandemic Period	Phase 1 No new influenza sub-types have been detected in humans.
	Phase 2 An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals.
Pandemic Alert Period	Phase 3 Human infection(s) with a new sub-type, which may include large clusters, but human-to-human spread still localized
	Phase 4 Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.
	Phase 5 Larger cluster(s) with human-to-human spread still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible
Pandemic Period	Phase 6 Increased and sustained transmission in the general population
Post-pandemic Period	Return to inter-pandemic period.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

LEADERSHIP TEAM

During the time of a potential pandemic, PCA will require a leadership team to coordinate the efforts of the school. As well, the team will form the core group of an essential services group who will be called on to work through the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods.

Staff have been identified on the basis of role to support important functions of the Board. This team will provide both communication and system direction.

Composition of the Pandemic Response Team:

- Director of Operations and Ministry
- ES/HS Principals
- Communication (ES/HS Head Secretaries)
- Public Affairs Media and Issues Manager
- Information Technology Services Manager
- Program Co-ordinator
- Facility Services Central Services Manager

Responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Director and Principals	Ensure messaging to the system is complete and accurate
	Approve a baseline budget to support the Emergency Response Office (staffing supports and equipment)
	Provide timely information to the Board and parents on matters related to school specific flu pandemic issues
	Approve all system communications and directives
	Provide regular updates to the system as often as necessary
Communications/Public Affairs Media and Issues	Develop Communication Plan with key system messages
	Co-ordinate PCA's communication activities, including press releases, press conferences, print and electronic messaging, intranet link, etc
	Relay information in a timely manner to the Director, Board, and Senior Team
	Participate in daily briefing sessions.
Information Technology (I.T.)	Support intranet Web page messaging
	Provide Maplewood support re attendance reporting for students
International Student care	Establish protocol for admission and intake of visa students during a flu pandemic
	Provide support for visa students who may not be able to travel home because of travel restrictions
Professional Support Services: Guidance	Provide counselling support for students as needed
Program	Provide curriculum support as needed
	Liaison with the IT to explore the use of the Internet for curriculum delivery
	Establish appropriate guidelines (e.g. assessment and evaluation, and protocol for mouthpieces – musical instruments)

MANAGEMENT POLICIES

CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR ON-GOING OPERATIONS

The following chart describes the stages and phases of a pandemic, the operational outlook in the school and some detail on response.

STAGE	PHASE	OPERATIONS OUTLOOK
Inter-Pandemic Period	Phase 1: No new influenza sub-types have been detected in humans.	Normal Operations
	Phase 2: An Influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals	Normal Operations
Pandemic Alert Period	Phase 3: Human infection(s) with a new subtype, which may include large clusters, but human-to-human spread still localized.	Normal Operations
	Phase 4: Small cluster(s) with limited human to human transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans	Normal Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information will be available in passive format: website
	Phase 5: Larger cluster(s) with human to human spread still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans but may not yet be fully transmissible	Normal Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCA Pandemic Response Team on Alert An up-to-date contact list will be available for Pandemic Response Team Active Monitoring by PCA Pandemic Response Team on a daily basis Information from Toronto Public Health analysed Review of cleaning protocols with notification to caretakers and managers Re-posting of hand washing materials Insure appropriate cleaning materials are available Information will be available in passive format: website
Pandemic Period	Phase 6: Increased and sustained transmission in the general population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate school closure to all stakeholders Notify all employees and provide all relevant information Ensure daily communication among the Pandemic Response Team
	It is possible the province may order school closure.	

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

PROCESS

1. During the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases the school will operate as normal.
2. During the interpandemic period, a campaign to update personal information for use in emergency situations will be undertaken.
3. During the interpandemic period, the ES/HS will prepare fan out phone lists for contact with staff.
4. During the interpandemic period, the following information should be readily available to the following:
 - School Staff: fan out phone contact for colleagues
 - Departments: fan out phone contact for colleagues (business office)
 - Principals and Vice Principals: fan out phone contact for support from colleagues

GUIDELINES

The following guidelines deal with school operational issues and are the responsibility of the Director. They provide information that will be altered to address the specific circumstances.

EXCURSIONS

1. Excursions/field trips during the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases will continue as normal.
2. During a pandemic alert phase, Principals will compile a complete list of all overnight and out of country excursions that have been approved to the end of the current school year. This will be reported to the Director's Office and the Pandemic Response Team.
3. Toronto Public Health, the Province of Ontario or the Government of Ontario may provide information during the pandemic phase that cautions travellers from visiting areas of active pandemic.
4. The Director may authorize direction to ES/HS to suspend some or all excursions/field trips during a pandemic period.
5. Communication about the suspension of excursions/field trips will be distributed from the Directors Office through the usual internal channels: e-mails to principals, Direct Line, PCA web, TEL.
6. School principals will review all outstanding excursion plans for the year and determine which ones will no longer be permitted.
7. Where parents have had previous notice of the planned excursions, parent communication will be prepared by the principal for distribution.
8. Monies collected for excursions may be carried over for another date or refunded as determined by the principal

VOLUNTEERS

1. The use of volunteers during the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases will continue as normal.
2. Toronto Public Health, the Province of Ontario or the Government of Ontario may provide information during the pandemic phase that provides direction to limit the use of volunteers in schools.
3. The Director may authorize direction to ES/HS to limit use of volunteers during a pandemic outbreak.
4. Communication about limiting the use of volunteers will be distributed from the Directors Office through the usual internal channels: e-mails to principals, PCA web, TEL.
5. External communication about limiting the use of volunteers will be distributed through the Communications department.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PLACEMENTS

1. During the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases, Cooperative Education placements will continue as usual.
2. Once a pandemic emergency has been declared, PCA will act upon the recommendations of the Toronto Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Health Canada.
3. If a pandemic emergency is declared, the following actions will be undertaken:
 - All cooperative education placements in hospitals, health care companies or other institutions will be suspended. The period of time of the suspension will be determined in conjunction with Toronto Public Health.
 - If PCA is closed, students from PCA will not attend their cooperative education placements.
4. Students and parents will be informed of the suspension of their usual programs by memo from the school office and through their teachers. An announcement will be placed on the PCA website.

HOME SCHOOLING

1. During the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases, the requests to home-schooled children attending PCA part-time will continue as usual.
2. Once a pandemic emergency has been declared, PCA will act upon the recommendations of the Toronto Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Health Canada.
3. Once a pandemic emergency is declared, some parents might choose to home-school their children. PCA will continue to maintain school attendance as long as it is safe to do so and will encourage continued attendance at school. If parents request home-schooling, the school principal may record this.
4. Homework or other teacher-organized work for home-schooling will not be provided during the pandemic period. Parents may be directed to the PCA website for curriculum outlines, expectations, and exemplars.
5. Should the school be closed, students may take their texts home with them to continue their studies at home.
6. Parents and students will be able to access information on the PCA website.

FOOD SERVICES AND CAFETERIAS

1. During the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases, food and cafeteria services may continue as usual.
2. During the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases, the school may continue special events with food, for example pizza days and birthdays.
3. Once a pandemic emergency has been declared, PCA will act upon the recommendations of the Toronto Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Health Canada.
4. If a pandemic emergency is declared, the school will discontinue special events with food.
5. If a pandemic emergency is declared, the provision of food and cafeteria services will continue as long as it is deemed safe by the health authorities.
6. Parents and students will be informed of changes through memos home from the school as well as through messages posted on the PCA website.

CHILDCARE

1. During the interpandemic and pandemic alert phases, Child Care will continue to operate as usual.
2. During a pandemic the Child Care will be prioritized as continuing operation while the school is open. In some circumstances, child care operators may wish to declare their operations closed during a pandemic. PCA would respect these decisions.
3. Once a pandemic emergency has been declared, PCA will act upon the recommendations of the Toronto Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Health Canada.
4. If the school is closed, the Child Care will not have access to the building and will need to close operation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Recommended by Toronto Public Health)

What is influenza?

Influenza, the flu, is caused by a specific virus that typically comes around each fall or winter. People who get the flu usually have an abrupt onset of fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, physical exhaustion, cough, sore throat and runny or stuffy nose. Children may also feel sick to their stomach, vomit or have diarrhea.

What is Pandemic Influenza?

An influenza pandemic occurs when there is an abrupt and major change in the protein structure of the Influenza A virus resulting, in a new strain. Because people have little or no immunity to this new strain, it can spread quickly, causing outbreaks in one or more countries or worldwide. This is called a pandemic.

How often do flu pandemics occur?

Flu pandemics have historically occurred three or four times each century. There were three flu pandemics in the last century (1918, 1957 and 1968).

Can a pandemic be prevented at an early stage?

Efforts will be made internationally to control a pandemic at an early stage. However, flu is highly contagious and because whole populations will be susceptible to the new virus, it is not considered possible to halt the spread of a pandemic.

How will we know if a pandemic has started?

The World Health Organization and certain countries have large surveillance programs to monitor and detect influenza activity around the world, including the emergence of potential pandemic strains. The WHO will declare the beginning of a pandemic. The Public Health Agency of Canada and the provincial Ministry of Health and Long term Care will declare the beginning of the pandemic period in Canada and Ontario, respectively.

How will we know the pandemic flu has reached Canada/Ontario/Toronto?

Canada has developed an influenza surveillance system which is comprised of laboratory-based influenza virus identification, reporting of influenza-like illness by sentinel physicians across the country and reporting of influenza activity by provincial and territorial epidemiologists. Local and provincial public health jurisdictions may also undertake additional surveillance measures. This information will help identify pandemic influenza as early as possible.

How will the pandemic flu spread to Canada?

Most likely this will occur when a person ill with the disease in an affected part of the world travels to Canada and develops symptoms here.

Will people be prevented from traveling?

If a pandemic starts outside of Canada, people are likely to be advised not to travel to affected areas or attend international gatherings such as large conferences and sporting events. Depending on how the pandemic develops, it may be necessary to reduce the movement of people within Canada to delay spread of the disease.

Who will be at risk during a flu pandemic?

Everyone is potentially at risk of becoming ill during an influenza pandemic. Certain groups may be at greater risk than others but that will not be known until the pandemic virus emerges.

How long will the pandemic last?

Based on the last two pandemics, it is estimated that the next pandemic will arrive in Canada within three months of emerging in another part of the world. However, it may arrive much sooner because of global air travel.

What are antiviral drugs?

Antiviral drugs are used for the prevention or treatment of some viral infections. These drugs destroy a virus or interfere with its ability to grow and reproduce. When used for prevention, people must take the medication for as long as they are exposed to the virus. When used for treatment, infected people receive the drug to reduce symptoms, shorten the length of illness and minimize serious complications. Antiviral medications must be taken within 48 hours of the first symptoms of influenza to be effective.

PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

- Preventive hand-washing and cough etiquette campaigns
- Messages for students, staff, and parents
- Procedure for environmental cleaning of school and workplaces
- Training for food services staff and custodial staff for enhanced infection control techniques

Toronto Public Health has advised the following with regard to prevention, education and cleaning workplaces in the *Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan - A Planning Guide for Schools, March 2007*.

Practise hand hygiene

Clean your hands frequently with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water, especially after you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose. A 60 to 90% alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the preferred agent for hand hygiene unless your hands are visibly soiled. If your hands are visibly soiled, you should wash them with soap and water. If you are not near water and your hands are visibly soiled, clean your hands with a moist towelette to remove visible debris, and then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The influenza virus is easily killed by soap, hand wash or hand sanitizer products. Therefore gloves or special antibacterial hand wash products are not needed. Hand washing/sanitizing is a very important method to prevent the spread of pandemic influenza.

Hand washing procedure

- Wet hands.
- Apply soap.
- Lather for 15 seconds. Rub between fingers, back of hands, fingertips, under nails.
- Rinse well under running water.
- Dry hands well with paper towel or hot air blower.
- Turn taps off with paper towel, if available.

Hand sanitizing procedure

- Apply sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol-based).
- Rub hands together.
- Work the sanitizer between fingers, the back of hands, fingertips, under nails.
- Rub hands until dry.

Practise respiratory etiquette

People should be encouraged to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze. This will help stop the spread of germs that can make people sick. It is important to keep your distance (e.g., more than one metre/three feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing, if possible.

Cover your cough procedure

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough, sneeze or blow your nose.
- Put used tissues into the waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not in your hands.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol-based).

Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose

Influenza spreads when the infected respiratory secretions from the mouth or nose of one person come into contact with the mucous membranes (mouth, nose or eyes) of another person. Without even realizing it, you may touch the infected nose and mouth secretions of someone who has influenza (e.g., by shaking hands). If you go on to touch your mouth, nose or eyes, the influenza virus may gain entry into your body causing infection.

Stay home if you are ill

Most adults infected with influenza can transmit the virus from 24 hours before and up to five days after they begin to experience symptoms. For some adults and for young children, this period may last for seven or more days. Some experts believe that people are most infectious in the first three days after they are infected with influenza. However there are no clear data on how long a person should wait before returning to work or school to minimize the risk of infecting others. The best advice at this time is that adults should not return to their usual activities for at least five days after they begin to experience influenza symptoms (seven days for young children) or when they feel well enough to return to their duties, whichever is longer. It should be made clear that employees must not come into work when they have influenza-like symptoms. If an employee develops influenza-like symptoms while at work they should immediately leave the workplace.

Use of masks

The use of masks is a difficult and unresolved issue. According to the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan, there is no evidence that the use of masks in public will protect an individual from infection when the influenza virus is circulating widely in the community. However a person wearing a mask properly at the time of exposure to influenza may benefit from the barrier that a mask provides. Toronto City Council has urged the federal and provincial ministers of health to give further consideration to the wearing of masks in situations where potential exposure to infectious individuals is unavoidable.

Cleaning workplaces

People with influenza may contaminate their surroundings with respiratory secretions from their nose and mouth. Surfaces that are touched frequently by people (e.g., door knobs, computer terminals, bathroom faucets or other shared equipment) should be cleaned more often than usual during a pandemic, if possible. The influenza virus is easily killed by regular cleaning products, therefore special cleaning agents or disinfectants are not required. Schools should follow their current infection control protocols for cleaning and disinfecting. Garbage created by a person with known or suspect influenza does not need any special handling and may be placed with the regular garbage for disposal.

Social distancing in the workplace

During an influenza pandemic, the more people you are in contact with, the more you are at risk of coming in contact with someone who is infected with influenza. Social distancing means reducing or avoiding contact with other people as much as possible. Some workplace strategies to achieve this may include:

- minimizing contact with others by using stairs instead of crowded elevators; canceling non-essential face-to-face meetings and using teleconferencing, e-mails, and faxes instead; staying one metre (three feet) away from others when a meeting is necessary
- avoiding shaking hands, hugging, or kissing people
- bringing lunch and eating at your desk or away from others

Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan - A Planning Guide for Schools March 2007

Resources

http://www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/hand_washing_instruction.pdf

http://www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/sleeve_sneeze_cover_cough.pdf

http://www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/sleeve_sneeze_sneeze.pdf

http://www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/sleeve_sneeze_backgrounder_hands.pdf

CLOSURE DECISIONS

In a severe pandemic emergency, school closure may be required. This could be to reduce the possibility of infection, because there is insufficient staff to supervise students or there are other situations that would result in a closure. The following is the statement on school closures from the *Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan - A Planning Guide for Schools March 2007*.

Settings where children gather face particular infection prevention and control challenges because children shed virus longer than adults and because children (particularly young children) may not be capable of implementing some practices independently (e.g., hand washing, using tissues).

According to the Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan (September 2006), public health officials may recommend school closures prior to or during a pandemic, especially if the novel virus strain preferentially affects school-aged children or causes unusually severe illness in this age group. If schools are closed it would likely be done early in the pandemic in order to have the greatest possible benefit.

The decision to close Toronto schools would be made by the Medical Officer of Health in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Education, neighbouring jurisdictions and affected school boards. School boards should identify other situations that could result in school closures, (e.g., insufficient number of staff).

Peoples Christian Academy will follow the direction of Toronto Public Health regarding school closures.

Information taken from:

- 1. The Toronto District School Board Pandemic Response Plan*
- 2. Toronto Public Health Pandemic Influenza Plan – A Planning Guide for Schools, March 2007.*