

Dufferin Christian School

Pandemic Preparedness Guidelines September 2009

Introduction

In light of the concerns regarding the health of our children during a possible pandemic of the H1N1 flu virus, our Manitoba Minister of Education, Mr. Peter Bjornson, has instructed all schools to prepare and submit a Pandemic Preparedness Plan. The purpose of this document is to ensure that all parents and students are informed of the precautions that DCS will take to help prevent and/or deal with a possible pandemic.

Since DCS is closely tied to the Prairie Rose School Division in matters of busing, Industrial Arts/Home Economics, and Career Internship, DCS may experience disruptions due to the implementation of the Division's Pandemic Plan. In that event, the parents of DCS will be informed of the implications and ramifications of Prairie Rose's decisions.

Background

What is pandemic influenza?

Pandemic influenza is an epidemic that spreads throughout the world. Influenza A is the type of influenza virus involved in all known influenza pandemics. Influenza A virus can undergo major changes or shifts in genetic makeup, producing a completely new strain for which most people have little or no specific immunity. As a result, large numbers of individuals become infected as it spreads.

For an influenza virus to be considered a pandemic, it must be a new virus with the ability to spread efficiently among people, causing widespread illness and death.

How is influenza spread?

The influenza virus enters the body through the nose, eyes or throat.

- When people with influenza cough or sneeze, large droplets containing the virus are produced and can travel up to one meter in the air.
- Inhaling these droplets or having them come into contact with your mouth, eyes or nose can result in infection. This can occur by:
- Hand-to-hand contact with infected individuals, or by touching surfaces or handling objects contaminated by infected individuals.

- Infected persons can be contagious from the day before they develop symptoms and up to seven days afterwards (typically three to five days in healthy adults and up to seven days in children). This timeframe may be longer for children and people with decreased immune system functioning.
- Not everyone who comes in contact with influenza virus will become ill. However, they may still spread it to others.

What are the symptoms?

Once infected with influenza, it usually takes from one to three days to develop symptoms. Symptoms include:

- fever and a cough often accompanied by one or more of the following:
 - aching muscles and joints
 - headache
 - severe weakness and fatigue
 - sore throat
 - runny nose
- Children can have additional gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, but these symptoms are uncommon in adults.

Generally, symptoms can last four to seven days. A cough and general fatigue may persist for several weeks. Most people recover from influenza without medical intervention. However, some people, particularly the very young or old, and those with compromised immune systems, can develop complications including bacterial infections such as pneumonia, which can result in prolonged illness or even death.

Impact upon Schools

The working expectation is that schools will continue to operate and provide an environment that is as safe as possible during a pandemic. However, educational continuity in schools could be impacted by:

- employee absenteeism
- student absenteeism
- interruption of services and supplies and reduction in outside supports
- potential school closures
- potential additional duties
- financial losses or incremental costs
- potential spread of infection at school
- staff and students becoming ill at school

Will our school close?

DCS will not automatically close. The working expectation is that DCS will continue to operate and provide an environment that is as safe as possible during a pandemic. It is possible that DCS may close if Manitoba Public Health officials order the temporary closure of all public facilities where people congregate, including schools, in the early stages of a pandemic, in an attempt to slow the spread and impact of the disease.

It is possible circumstances may cause a temporary, incidental closure of DCS. This could be due to excessive employee absenteeism or a critical building system failure that results in the inability to maintain a safe environment for students. The decision to close the school will be made by the Board and Principal.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) or other government authorities could potentially ask our school to close if the building is required for other purposes during a pandemic. Such a decision would be made collaboratively with the School Board and Principal. Although Manitoba Health, Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization, and MECY have the authority to close schools for health, emergency response or educational reasons respectively, the working expectation is that decisions about school closure will remain a local responsibility as much as possible.

Emergent Illness among students while at school

As much as possible, ill children will stay in a separate area and be kept apart even if they are not displaying characteristic influenza symptoms. This serves to minimize the likelihood of transmission between those with influenza and those ill due to other causes. Parents will be contacted so that their child may be picked up from school.

Potential spread of infection at school

Measures to reduce interpersonal exposure in DCS will be balanced with the need to maintain normal routines and school operations.

DCS will:

- Establish a clear and well-communicated message that stresses the need for students and staff to stay home if they are displaying any flu-like symptoms. This will be done via the weekly newsletter and the monthly Beacon.
- Promote personal hygiene practices by educating and reminding students and others of the importance of preventive measures.

School administration will ensure that staff and students are made aware of these preventative steps:

- Make efforts to improve your general health through healthy living behaviours such as exercising, eating well, and getting enough sleep
- Washing hands often and teaching others to do the same
- Keeping hands away from mouth, nose, and eyes
- Not sharing eating utensils or drinks, or school supplies such as pencils or rulers, or musical instruments with mouthpieces
- Covering a cough
- Getting a vaccine (when available)
- Staying home if sick

Further information can be accessed from the document entitled “Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Guidelines for Manitoba School Divisions and Schools (K-12). This document is available online at www.gov.mb.ca/health/documents/pandemic_school.pdf.

DCS’s Responsibilities to Students and Families

DCS is committed to the membership and the students that it serves. Therefore, DCS has identified its responsibilities to them in the event of a pandemic. They are as follows:

- The interest of DCS students is paramount in the determination of academic concerns in the event of a pandemic.
- Staff will encourage students to take appropriate cautionary measures to prevent the spread of a pandemic.
- During a pandemic, every effort will be made to continue to offer school services as normally as possible.
- DCS will provide students and parents with timely communication regarding the school’s plans and expectations for continued instruction.
- Decisions on day-to-day instructional matters will be the responsibility of the principal.
- Decisions to revise exam schedules or alter the academic schedule will be made by the Principal.
- Decisions will be made by school administration regarding students who have missed or not completed work due to illness, class cancellations, or other reasons connected to the pandemic.
- In the event of DCS closure, staff will try to determine alternate means of delivering academic programs.
- In the event of school closure, DCS administration will provide parents with as much lead time as possible, the reasons for the closure, and a realistic estimate of the duration of the closure.

- Due consideration will be given to the needs for students with special needs in the event of a pandemic. The school will assist the parents in providing extra supports that may be needed to help the continuation of their academic programming.

Parental and student responsibilities to DCS

In the event of a pandemic, DCS has identified the following responsibilities of the parents and students.

- Section 2.62 of The Public Schools Act allows parents to keep children out of school if they are ill.
- All students will be asked to remain away from school and not attend classes if they are showing flu symptoms. Parents and guardians must contact the school and inform the office of the reason for the student's absence
- If a closure of the school has been announced, students will be expected to:
 - * Remain away from the school during the shutdown.
 - * Check school website for course information and lesson delivery
 - * Check school website for updates on the closure and information on the re-opening of the school
 - * Monitor television and radio for announcements concerning DCS and the Prairie Rose School Division

Once a re-opening of the school has been announced, students will be expected to report to class on the identified day.

- If they are unable to report to class because they are in quarantine, nursing an infected person, or are ill with the pandemic influenza, they must contact the school and inform the office of the reason for their absence.

Contact Information

School Phone: 745-2278 School Fax: 745-3441
Website www.dufferinchristian.ca

Attachment A

H1N1 Flu: BULLETIN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

What can we expect this flu season?

Flu viruses change over time. It is difficult to accurately predict what will happen. Although there have been cases of severe illness and death associated with this virus, most individuals with H1N1 in Manitoba have recovered without specific medical care or hospitalization. It is expected that an H1N1 flu vaccine will be available for any Canadian who wants it later this fall and this could help to limit the spread and severity of illness. However, schools should also prepare for higher rates of employee and student absenteeism, and are encouraged to have their pandemic plans in place.

Will schools be closed?

H1N1 is considered to be present in all Manitoba communities and in all public settings. Health officials assess the situation on an ongoing basis to determine the most appropriate public health interventions to best protect the health of Manitobans. Any decision to close a school or set of schools would involve careful consideration of the specific situation at that time, taking into account the spread and severity of the virus within Manitoba, as well as recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada, and other jurisdictions. Direction on school closures for public health reasons would come from the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, in consultation with the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer and/or regional medical officer of health.

Should parents/guardians have a child care plan?

Parents/guardians are encouraged to have a back-up plan for child care. When developing a plan, parents/guardians should consider:

- Child care arrangements if your child is sick and unable to attend school;
- Child care arrangements if you are sick and require support after school-hours, including a designated person(s) to pick up children should you be unavailable.

Where can I get more information?

For additional information on H1N1 flu, please visit: www.manitoba.ca/flu or contact your local public health nurse. For more information on how to care for someone with the flu please see the fact sheet *Self Care and Influenza* or contact Health Links-Info Santé at **788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257** (toll-free).

Attachment B

H1N1 Flu Bulletin: BACKGROUND AND INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF

1. Influenza

Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. It can cause a variety of symptoms, such as fever, cough, aches and physical exhaustion. People usually recover from the flu without medical help.

The flu virus can spread easily from person to person by coughing or sneezing, by hand-to-hand contact with an infected person, or after handling objects contaminated by infected people. The virus can survive on hard surfaces for up to 48 hours, on cloth, paper or tissue for up to 12 hours and on hands for about five minutes, long enough for you to inadvertently touch your mouth, nose or eyes and transfer the virus to your body. People are usually contagious for about a week starting the day before symptoms appear. Not everyone who gets the flu develops symptoms but they still may be able to spread it to others, especially if they cough or sneeze.

2. H1N1 flu

H1N1 is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the seasonal flu. Cases of H1N1 flu have been reported in people around the world, including Canada.

Flu viruses change over time. It is difficult to accurately predict what will happen. Although there have been cases of severe illness and death associated with this virus, most individuals with H1N1 in Manitoba have recovered without specific medical care or hospitalization.

3. Symptoms of Influenza-like Illness (ILI)

- Sudden fever of 38°C (100.4°F)
- Cough AND
- One or more of the following: sore throat, muscle aches, or physical exhaustion.
- Children may also feel sick to their stomach, vomit or have diarrhea, but these symptoms are uncommon in adults.
- Elderly people and people with lowered immunity may not develop a fever.

4. Infection Prevention

At the present time, the H1N1 flu virus appears to be transmitted in the same manner as other flu strains. All staff and students should follow routine measures to prevent spread of infection, including:

- **Hand Hygiene**

Staff and students should wash their hands regularly with soap and water, especially after coughing and sneezing. When soap and water are unavailable, hand sanitizers may be an acceptable alternative if hands are not visibly soiled.

- **Cough Etiquette**

Staff and students should also be taught to follow cough and sneeze etiquette practices including coughing into a sleeve or elbow and using tissues.

- **Cleaning**

Maintaining routine cleaning practices for schools and school buses is advised.

NOTE: The use of masks by healthy individuals in non-health care settings has not been shown to be effective in preventing people from getting the flu. For most people, wearing a mask is not necessary or recommended.

5. Education

- Provide parents/guardians and staff with information on H1N1 flu, symptoms to watch for and school protocols for sending a child or staff member home.
- Educate staff and students on good hygiene practices, including proper hand washing and cough etiquette.
- Post age appropriate signage about cough and sneeze etiquette and hand hygiene in publicly accessible areas.

6. Influenza-like Illness Symptoms in Students or Staff

Individuals with Influenza-like Illness should be sent home promptly to prevent further spread of infection, as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

7. Reporting to Public Health

Schools are requested to report instances of unusually high absenteeism to the public health nurse at their local community public health office.

A listing of public health offices can be found at:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html>

8. School Closures

At this time, there has been no public health reason to close schools. Health officials assess the situation on an ongoing basis to determine the most appropriate public health interventions to best protect the health of Manitobans. Any decision to order school closures would involve careful consideration of the specific situation at that time, taking into account the spread and severity of the virus within Manitoba, as well as recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada, and other jurisdictions. In the event that the public health risk is considered sufficient to warrant closing a school or group of schools, direction will come from the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, who will provide such direction based on consultation with the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer and/or the regional medical officer of health.

9. For more Information

For additional information on H1N1 flu, please visit: www.manitoba.ca/flu

For information for schools, please visit:

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/flu/index.html

For more information on how to care for someone with the flu, please see the fact sheet *Self Care and Influenza* or contact Health Links-Info Santé at **788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257** (toll-free).

DCS would like to express appreciation to River East -Transcona School Division, Prairie Rose School Division and ICS for allowing us to use their "Guidelines" and adapt them to our situation at DCS.

Attachment C

List of Teacher Resources



Hand Hygiene Resource List for Schools

1. **“Bug Out! Get the Facts on Germs”** was developed by the Canadian Red Cross as a prevention of disease transmission education program for youth. It provides a variety of teaching and communication tools for teachers and educators including: facilitator’s guides, activity booklets, family booklet, and participation certificates. <http://www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=26447&tid=001>
2. **“Be a Germ Stopper!”** The lesson plans and activities in this resource manual are linked to the Ontario Curriculum from kindergarten to grade 8. The goal of this program is to educate teachers, children and their families about healthy hand hygiene. This initiative targets the elementary schools and child care centres”
<http://www.hkpr.on.ca/uploadedFiles/GermStopper.pdf>
3. **“Do Bugs Need Drugs”** is a program designed to promote hand washing and appropriate antibiotic use for the public, healthcare professionals and in schools, long-term care centres, assisted living sites and daycares. This section contains teaching materials for educating children in schools. It was piloted in Alberta. <http://www.dobugsneeddrugs.org/teachers/>
4. **Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC Atlanta Georgia)**
Educators and students can help slow the spread of colds and flu. On these sites, you will find information on preventing the flu, as well as materials and tools for use at schools, daycares and community sites.
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/> www.scrubclub.org
<http://www.itsasnap.org/index.asp>
5. **Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada websites**
Handwashing is easy to learn, cheap and incredibly effective at stopping the spread of disease-causing germs. These pages give basic info re handwashing, as well as FAQs and links to other related resources.
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/hands-mains-eng.php>
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/chn-rcs/handwash-eng.php>

Hand Hygiene Signs and posters

MB Health Hand Hygiene poster <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/docs/hand.pdf>

MB Health Cough Etiquette poster
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/docs/cough.pdf>

[Our Health is In your Hands - Keep Them Clean](#) 

[Handwashing with Soap and Water](#) 

[Cleaning Hands with Sanitizer](#) 

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