

Pandemic Influenza: State Public Health Agency Preparation and Response

All states have developed detailed pandemic influenza plans as required by the Department of Health and Human Services. Plan development has been supported by the CDC preparedness cooperative agreement funds to states. Many states have either conducted a pandemic influenza exercise or have set dates for an exercise within the next year to test and evaluate the effectiveness of these plans.

In an Influenza Pandemic, Public Health Agencies Will Be Responsible For:

Surveillance

- Detect outbreaks of disease; identify pandemic influenza strains; implement appropriate intervention strategies. Disease surveillance will be accomplished through methods such as daily monitoring of hospitals for influenza activity, review of non-hospital influenza-related deaths, analysis of reports from participating health care systems, and laboratory diagnoses.
- Coordinate surveillance activities with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Monitor and report state-wide influenza-related illness and deaths.
- Track attack rates in various population subgroups, and adjust response activities accordingly.
- Monitor the pandemic's effect on the population's mental health and adjust response accordingly.
- Monitor the spread of disease in animal populations in conjunction with agriculture and veterinarians.

Disease Control

- Implement disease containment measures, including travel restrictions, isolation and quarantine.
- Assure appropriate community disease containment strategies, such as the closing of schools and limiting public gatherings, by working with public officials, other governmental agencies (such as law enforcement and transportation), businesses, schools, healthcare facilities and other community resources.

Communications

- Disseminate timely, accurate, and consistent information among all health departments and healthcare providers on vaccine prioritization and use, antiviral use for treatment and chemoprophylaxis, infection control, and treatment and care of patients.
- Work with local press and other media outlets to ensure timely dissemination of accurate information for the public.
- Provide timely public messages about the status of the pandemic, illness prevention strategies, and caring for sick family and friends; translate public health messages for non-English speaking persons.
- Establish influenza hotlines, influenza websites and other resources for the public to access influenza information.

Public Health Laboratory

- Ensure the proper collection, transport, and testing of highly infectious influenza specimens.
- Distinguish between infection caused by traditional influenza strains and infection caused by the pandemic strain and track the occurrence and rate of transmission of the pandemic virus in the state through molecular sub-typing methodologies.
- Test for antigenic changes in the pandemic virus; adjust response activities accordingly.

Influenza Vaccine and Antiviral Management (as available)

- Assess population size and locations within state that will need vaccines and antivirals during a pandemic.
- Assess the location and amount of current antiviral supply held by health departments, hospitals, pharmacies, and others within the state; allocate and distribute additional antiviral supplies and track administration to ensure target priority groups.
- Distribute, track, and coordinate administration of vaccines to priority groups.
- Conduct, with healthcare providers, vaccination clinics, track administration of doses, and follow up with each recipient to administer second dose if more than one dose is required to induce immunity.
- Work with private providers, community health centers, mass vaccinators, and pharmacies to ensure vaccines are stored and handled properly and are targeted to those most in need.
- Provide informational materials on safety, use, and supply of vaccines and antivirals
- Track, document, and report adverse events related to vaccines and antivirals.

Maintenance of Essential Health and Medical Services

- Assure the continuation and delivery of essential public health services while providing for the emergency needs of the population.
- Augment medical, nursing, and other healthcare staffing to maintain appropriate standards of care during pandemic. Develop and maintain a list of voluntary emergency medical personnel and supplies.
- Work with healthcare providers to assure alternate facilities where overflow cases from hospitals and well persons needing quarantine away from home can receive care.
- Ensure adequate capacity to handle mass mortality.