

Preparing to Plan

To support schools in creating specific pandemic influenza measures to add to their emergency crisis plans, pre-planning at the jurisdiction- and district-level is critical. The information in this section will enable local public health agencies to present a locally customized toolkit to school districts that allows school districts to focus on their planning tasks.

Pandemic Influenza School Planning Toolkit Content Overview

The Pandemic Influenza School Planning Toolkit is designed to assist schools in developing specific pandemic influenza measures to integrate into their emergency crisis plans. The following overview of toolkit components shows how the different parts of this toolkit work together:

- **Pandemic Influenza Plan Template**

The plan template is the core of the toolkit. It is designed to guide the school's pandemic planning process.

- It is organized to reflect the sequence of crisis management: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. This will make it compatible with your existing emergency crisis plan.
- It has several accompanying tools to guide you in completing the more challenging sections of the plan template.

Once the plan template is filled in, it can be a supplement to a school's emergency crisis plan.

Several tools were developed to support the template. They are designed:

- To guide planning and
- To provide information and resources needed make planning decisions.

The following is a brief overview of the tools.

- **Communication Tools (Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery)**

The communication tools include memos, letters/e-mails/Web communications, handouts, fact sheets, check lists, and PowerPoint presentations that you can use to keep district personnel and families informed. These tools can be used as is or customized for your school community.

The PowerPoint presentations can be used to inform and educate district personnel and parents/guardians. The Pandemic Influenza Overview can be used to orient your district's pandemic planning committee to the planning process.

Unlike the other tools, the communication tools for Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery are grouped together. This is so that you can easily move a tool from one crisis management phase to another or decide to use a communication more than once.

- **Prevention Tools**

The Preventive Health Information Tools include pandemic-related lesson plans and prevention posters.

An annotated listing of curricula that is relevant to pandemic influenza and organized by grade level is provided with two sample lesson plans. Teachers can select the lesson plan that is best suited for their class to teach preventive health behaviors and provide opportunities to practice those behaviors.

Two posters—Limit the Spread of Germs and Wash Your Hands—are available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

- **Preparedness Tools**

There are three preparedness tools:

- Continuity of Management Tools: NIMS, ICS and Continuity of Operations Planning,
- Continuity of Instruction Tools, and
- School Employees as Disaster Service Workers Tools.

The Continuity of Management Tools provide Federal guidance and information on the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Incident Command System (ICS), and Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP). This will help you determine how your school will manage continuity of operations when schools are closed.

The Continuity of Instruction Tools focus on identifying technology resources both teachers and students have at home, and developing class-level learning plans for all classes and student-level learning plans for students with special needs. The learning plans concentrate on methods that will be used to continue instruction and on alternative learning strategies that may be used. A final tool provides examples of methods and of alternative learning strategies that teachers can draw from to develop the learning plans.

The School Employees as Disaster Service Workers Tools have been developed specific to the California Disaster Service Worker Program. In California, all public employees (including public school employees) have a mandated responsibility to assist during declared emergencies. These tools can be modified to reflect similar emergency legislation in other states. They are designed to help schools prepare their employees for this responsibility.

By going through this planning process, a school district will:

- Increase awareness of the threat of a pandemic influenza and its impact on the school community.
- Increase daily preventive health behaviors that limit the spread of viruses, such as a pandemic influenza.
- Prepare you to:
 - Continue student learning and core operations during the pandemic.
 - Recover, returning to the “new normal,” when the pandemic has passed.

As schools work through the planning process, it is important to remember that the enhanced ability to respond to pandemic influenza that is gained from planning efforts will also enhance the ability of a school to respond to many other hazards and threats. Emergency planning is ultimately about building and enhancing community resiliency.

Jurisdiction-Level Planning: Local Public Health Agency as Champion

This section of pre-planning is directed to the local public health agency. The local public health agency is the natural champion for school pandemic planning and is likely to be the first to see this toolkit since it was created for the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

Why is the local public health agency the natural champion? As the lead first responder for an influenza pandemic, limiting the spread of a pandemic and mitigating disease, suffering, and death—two of the Federal government goals for pandemic response—are public health priorities. These goals are not the priority of other organizations in your jurisdiction. It is up to local public health agencies to make an influenza pandemic a concern for local schools so that schools will prioritize the development of an influenza pandemic supplement for their emergency crisis plan.

While the leadership role is clear, the realities of public health funding and staffing may be barriers to fully embracing the role of champion and working collaboratively with local schools throughout the planning process. If this is the case, it is important to be realistic and to be strategic in how you champion school planning for a pandemic. Public health’s working relationship with local schools is important. To foster and build positive collaboration it is critical that public health agencies be forthright with local schools regarding its role in the planning process. Given the limitations, it may be helpful to

seek recommendations from local schools on how to focus limited public health time to maximize the benefit to schools. The role of champion does not disappear because staff and resources are lacking; however it can do damage to your agency's relationships with local schools if it is not handled well.

Local Health/Public Health Agency Pre-Planning Steps

Step 1: Review the toolkit.

It is important to begin by reviewing the toolkit carefully. Familiarize yourself with the toolkit's approach to pandemic planning for schools. As you read the preparedness section you will become aware of key issues for schools in continuing education during a pandemic, which is the most challenging part of pandemic planning for schools. Begin to develop strategies to champion the school planning effort that are aligned with local public health influenza pandemic planning.

Step 2: Complete the public health sections of the Influenza Pandemic Plan Template.

Like you, schools are busy carrying out their priority—education. There are sections of the Influenza Pandemic Plan Template that you can complete before distributing it to schools to make their planning easier. These sections are on:

- The legal authority for school closure.
- The role of schools in pandemic surveillance.
- The use of school personnel and facilities in a pandemic or other local emergency.

The legal authority for school closure is addressed in the following template sections: 2.4 and 3.1. It will be much easier for schools if you identify the state and local legal authorities with contact information now—there is no need for them to use their limited planning time to find this information. Sample information is provided in the Influenza Pandemic Plan Template regarding Santa Clara County's legal authority. Santa Clara County's description of health officer authorities related to a pandemic is also included as a tool.

Preparing to Plan Tool #1:

- *Sample Description of California Guidance and Santa Clara County Health Officer Statutory Authority for School Dismissals.*

The role of schools in pandemic surveillance is addressed in template sections 2.4 and 4.2. Insert how your public health agency intends to involve schools in surveillance in these sections.

Use of school personnel and facilities in a pandemic or other local emergency is addressed in sections 2.9 and 3.4. If your state does not have a mandated emergency response program that includes school district employees, you can delete the disaster service worker section now. If public health or local emergency management have plans for using school buildings during emergencies or guidance you can add to this section now that reflects your jurisdiction's approach to using school facilities during emergencies, you can add that information now.

Step 3: Modify the Influenza Pandemic Plan Template tools to reflect your local public health agency approach to pandemic planning.

Key tools to review that have public health information are the:

- Communication Tools
 - Memos
 - Letters/e-mails/Web communications
 - Handouts
 - Fact sheets and checklists
 - PowerPoint presentations.

Modify these tools as needed to reflect local public health agency influenza pandemic planning.

Step 4: Identify and recruit education leaders that are influential in your jurisdiction.

In Santa Clara County, this was the County Office of Education (which provides instructional, administrative, human resources, business and technical support services to the county's 32 school districts) and representatives of a few school districts. The education leaders in your community may be different. You know your community best. There are several key responsibilities for the education leader(s):

- To review the toolkit and modify it as appropriate for the local school community.
- To serve as a co-champion for school influenza pandemic planning.

How you define the role of co-champion will reflect your community. It is recommended that it include co-signing an introductory letter to all school districts to encourage school pandemic planning and introduce the toolkit. A sample introductory letter co-signed by the Public Health Officer and the Superintendent of the County Office of Education is included as a tool.

Preparing to Plan Tool #2:

- *Sample Introductory Letter from Health Officer and County Office of Education Superintendent.*

Step 5: Modify the Influenza Pandemic Plan Template and tools to reflect your school community.

Once you've identified a school co-champion, it is recommended that you review the toolkit with them. If there are recommendations for modifications to the Influenza Pandemic Plan Template, you can make them now. For example, if your jurisdiction has a county office of education that handles payroll for all school districts, information on how payroll will be handled during school closures can be added under Section 2.4 when core operations/essential functions are addressed.

It may also be helpful for a local school leader to review the following tools:

- Continuity of Management Tools: NIMS, ICS and Continuity of Operations Planning,
- Continuity of Instruction Tools, and
- School Employees as Disaster Service Workers Tools.

While public health can assist with any needed modification of these sections, it is recommended that modification of these tools, if needed, only be done in concert with a local education leader to ensure that education issues are addressed.

Step 6: Identify an influential police chief in your jurisdiction to support school pandemic planning.

Continuity of education will be important during a pandemic's school closure(s) to police, too. While keeping students involved in "normal routine" will ensure that students don't lose an entire academic year and provide a stabilizing anchor for them, it will also reduce the likelihood of numbers of bored and roaming students causing problems or engaging in criminal activities. In Santa Clara County, the influential police chief was the Chair of the Santa Clara County Police Chiefs Association. A sample letter co-signed by the Public Health Officer and a Police Chief is included as a tool.

Preparing to Plan Tool #3:

- *Sample Letter from Health Officer and County Police Chiefs Association Chair*

Step 7: Prepare to recruit local school districts for pandemic planning.

Identify all of the school districts in your jurisdiction. The education leader(s) you have been working with will be able to help you with this. You will need to identify the superintendent and the person in the district that has been charged with emergency planning.

As you define your recruitment strategies, keep in mind:

- A school's primary responsibility is education. It is a demanding job.

- Schools are often dealing with the same staffing and resource constraints as public health.
- Some schools may not have emergency crisis plans that are aligned with the latest U.S. Department of Education guidance.
- It is unlikely that schools will have continuity of operations plans, which are still relatively new in the public sector.
- Pandemic planning—particularly for continuity of instruction during school closures—is likely to be viewed as overwhelming.

Understanding school priorities, pressures and demands will facilitate more effective collaboration.

To ensure effective planning, you will be more successful if you recognize:

- The importance of engaging school administrators. Their involvement is crucial to elevating pandemic planning to a high priority at every level of the school system, in every administrative department, and in every school building. It is also essential to involving teachers and other school-based staff.
- The value of being alert to ways in which school districts can work together or share resources to reduce the planning workload.

Begin by identifying your strategies for initial contact and follow-up. You can invite all school districts to an orientation meeting or begin by recruiting districts individually. It will be important to do a thorough review of the toolkit with schools as part of orientation to support schools in starting the planning process and to make it possible for schools to ask questions and get clarification on the rationale for what they are being asked to do. You may also want to consider developing a Web site that posts strategies and resources that schools develop to continue instruction along with sections of plans that schools have done well. The strategies you decide to employ to kickoff the planning process and support schools need to be a good fit for your jurisdiction's school community.

Step 8: Define and communicate public health's role in school pandemic planning.

If your goal is for each school in your jurisdiction to create specific pandemic influenza measures to add to their emergency crisis plans, your job does not stop with recruiting local schools for pandemic planning. To achieve this goal, ongoing collaboration is essential.

As mentioned earlier, staff and resource limitations may be a barrier. Acknowledge this reality and work to focus the time you do have to work with local schools so that it is targeted to address school needs. Schools will likely be in the same position. Design a planning process that ensures that pandemic specific emergency planning with your local schools builds and enhances public health's relationships with local schools and

community resiliency. To be as successful as possible, it will be important to be realistic, set reasonable goals, and follow through on all commitments.

District-Level Planning: Setting the Stage for an Effective Planning Process

This section of pre-planning is directed to school districts. Once a school district receives the locally customized toolkit, there are a few things it can do to set the stage for an effective planning process.

Step 1: Review the toolkit.

The toolkit your receive should have been reviewed by your local public health agency and a local education leader. Ideally it will include local public health information so that you do not need to spend your time doing research to complete public health sections of the plan template. There may also be some further customization specific to the local educational community that has also been done and will save your time.

Prior to introducing the toolkit to personnel in your district, it is recommended that the person responsible for district emergency planning review it carefully. This is also a good time to bring your district nurse on board. As you review the toolkit:

- Identify sections that are district-level responsibilities and the sections that are already part of your district's emergency plan. Note this in the plan template so that each school site is not spending time on these sections.
- Customize the toolkit, as needed, so that if there are questions or sections that don't represent how your district operates, they can be modified now and reduce confusion down the road.

Make it a goal to understand what pandemic planning entails before you seek administrator buy-in and recruit a district pandemic planning committee.

Step 2: Engage school administrators.

The involvement of school administrators is crucial to elevating pandemic planning to a high priority at every level of the school system, in every administrative department, and in every school building. It is also essential to involving teachers and other school-based staff. Time spent developing administrator buy-in to the pandemic planning process is well worth it. Seek your local public health agency's support as needed.

Step 3: Recruit a district pandemic planning committee.

Section 2.1 of the Pandemic Influenza Plan Template provides guidance on district personnel to involve in pandemic influenza planning. You may already have a district emergency planning team or you may need to identify the entire team. To the extent possible, recruit the people who will be most helpful in moving the planning process forward.

Step 4: Convene a planning orientation meeting to kick-off planning.

How you orient the planning committee to the task at hand will reflect your district's culture. You may want to consider:

- Scheduling an influential school administrator to welcome the planning committee.
- Using the PowerPoint presentation, Pandemic Influenza Overview, that is available in the toolkit.
- Providing an overview of the toolkit.
- Designing a planning process that respects participants' time and brings in school expertise as needed for relevant template sections. Everyone does not need to do everything.
- Identifying ways in which pandemic planning may:
 - enhance the ability of your school to respond to other hazards and threats, and
 - enhance current operations and instruction.

Examples of enhancing current operations that add benefit now may include improving communication systems, adding direct deposit to payroll options, and/or building teacher and staff technology capabilities.

An example of enhancing instruction may include identifying alternative instructional strategies and methods for school closures that teachers begin to use now to enhance instruction or curriculum and/or provide students with additional learning resources.

Step 5: Plan.

All school districts have planning experience to bring to the table for this task. As you plan, create benchmarks to recognize progress.

When you complete the Pandemic Influenza Plan Template, you will have your district's pandemic supplement to your emergency crisis plan. Acknowledge those who have contributed and celebrate a job well done.

Good luck!