

Preparing to Plan Tool #1: Sample Description of California Guidance and Santa Clara County Health Officer Statutory Authority for School Dismissals

California Guidance for School Dismissals During and Influenza Pandemic¹

California Health Officers have statutory authority for school dismissals.

The Director of the California Department of Public Health recommends the following triggers for initiating non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as closing schools, subject to the epidemiological characteristics and other relevant information known at the time, including the severity and initial epidemiology of the virus:

- WHO Pandemic Phase 6 has been declared; and
- The Pandemic Severity Index is a category 2 or greater; and
- The first human laboratory-confirmed pandemic case in California.

An *alert* will be declared by CDC during WHO Pandemic Phase 6, when there are widespread human outbreaks in multiple locations outside of the United States.

Standby will be declared by CDC when the first human laboratory-confirmed case occurs anywhere in the United States.

Activation may be declared with the first laboratory-confirmed human pandemic influenza case identified in California depending on the epidemiological characteristics of the pandemic strain and other relevant factors.

The decision to activate in California will be made by the State Health Officer, in consultation with local health officers. Issuing a statewide order will ensure rapid, simultaneous, and uniform implementation of school dismissal across the state. Uniform implementation of early, layered, and targeted non-pharmaceutical interventions is crucial to disrupt transmission of the pandemic influenza virus.

If deemed appropriate for a local jurisdiction, a local Health Officer has the authority to close schools and may initiate student dismissals prior to the State Health Officer's order, after first notifying the State Health Officer of intent to do so.

Statutory Authority of the Santa Clara County Health Officer

The Santa Clara County Health Officer has duties that include the enforcement of public health laws and regulations as well as controlling disease and other threats to the public's health. The common connection within all of public health activities is the prevention of injury or illness from all causes, in all age groups and within all cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

¹ *Guidance for Student Dismissals During an Influenza Pandemic*, California Department of Public Health, July 2008.

By agreement, the Santa Clara County Health Officer serves as Health Officer for all cities in Santa Clara County,

The following sections of the California Health and Safety Code specify Health Officer authorities.

Sections 101000, 101025, 101030: Establishes the authority of County Health Officers to preserve and protect the public health by enforcing county orders, ordinances and statutes pertaining to public health.

Sections 101040, 101475: Authorizes County and City Health Officers to take preventive measures during an emergency. Preventative activities may include isolation, quarantine, and social distancing measures such as closing schools and public gatherings (sporting events, concerts, etc.).

Section 120175: Authorizes the local Health Officer to take measures necessary to control the spread of communicable disease.