

Preparing to Plan Tool #2: Sample Introductory Letter from Health Officer and County Office of Education Superintendent.

Dear Superintendent:

This *Pandemic Influenza School Planning Toolkit* is designed to provide you with the information that your district, schools, and staff will need in preparing for an influenza pandemic.

There is now an avian/bird influenza (H5N1) virus circulating in several countries. It is not yet in the United States. The presence of the virus in birds does not mean there will automatically be human cases. However, at some point, whether it is the H5N1 virus or another virus, health experts project that there will be a new virus that will spread easily among people. People will have no immunity against this new virus strain and as with any new virus it will take 6-8 months to manufacture an effective vaccine. When this virus begins spreading easily from person to person, we will have a global influenza pandemic. The pandemic will come in multiple waves over months to years.

In Santa Clara County, we estimate that 30 to 40 percent of the population will be clinically ill and that we may have as many as 22,000 deaths over the course of the pandemic. In a normal year, an estimated 5 to 10% of the population becomes ill and approximately 200 people in our county die from flu related causes. Needless to say, children are a critical consideration, both in terms of preventing the spread of the disease and keeping children healthy. We need your active engagement and partnership in preparing schools and families for a pandemic. Ongoing communication between the Santa Clara County Public Health Department and school districts will be a critical factor as events change and unfold.

The *Pandemic Influenza School Planning Toolkit* is consistent with Federal guidance for school emergency crisis planning. It is organized to reflect the sequence of crisis management:

- Prevention: Schools Open (addresses what schools and districts can do to prevent and limit the spread of disease).
- Preparedness: Schools Open (focuses on planning for a worst-case scenario pandemic influenza).
- Response: Schools Close (specifies the steps to take during an influenza pandemic).
- Recovery: Schools Reopen (deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after the pandemic).

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department has developed the *Pandemic Influenza School Planning Toolkit* for use by school districts in developing your own plan for prevention, continuity of operations, continuity of instruction, and recovery in the event of an influenza pandemic.

Please feel free to contact the Health Department at (408) 792-5040 if you have any questions regarding pandemic influenza. Thank you for your participation in this critical preparation.

Sincerely,



Martin Fenstersheib, MD, MPH
Public Health Officer
County of Santa Clara



Joe Fimiani
Acting Superintendent of Schools
Santa Clara County Office of Education