



Government of Saint Lucia

National Influenza Plan Volume 6: Ministry of Education Reporting Plan for Schools

To be annexed to School Disaster Plan

Modeled on Contra Costa Health Services School Action Steps for Pandemic Flu

http://www.cchealth.org/topics/pandemic_flu/school_action_kit/

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Cabinet Conclusion 498/2009 (18 May, 2009)
Authorised the National Influenza Plan for Saint Lucia



Preamble

NATIONAL INFLUENZA PLAN

The National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan is a collection of Documents as listed below.

The procedures are supported by the Saint Lucia National Emergency Management Plans, Policies, Legislation and Standard Operating Procedures.

Volume

1. Concept of Operations
2. Strategic Plan
3. Communications Strategy
4. Ministry of Health Plan
5. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Plan
6. Ministry of Education Plan
7. Law Enforcement, Public Safety, and Security
8. Essential Services
 - a. Ministry of the Public Service
 - b. Saint Lucia Fire Service
 - c. LUCELEC
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INTRODUCTION

[Taken from Ministry of Health Pandemic Influenza Plan]

INFLUENZA

Influenza is a viral respiratory disease affecting humans and certain animals. Clinical disease ranges from mild non specific illness to life threatening pneumonia and death, depending on the nature of the influenza strain and host characteristics. Human influenza is usually a recurrent seasonal illness which occurs at various times of the year in different continents (for example, typically late winter and spring in temperate countries of the Northern hemisphere). Although seasonal human influenza is certainly responsible for excess seasonal mortality every year all over the world (particularly at the extreme ages of the life and chronically ill), the usual mortality rate is relatively low and only minimal disruption of essential services occurs during a normal influenza season.

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

However, when a **completely new strain of influenza** emerges among human populations, mortality rates can be much higher than usual (generally from severe respiratory disease); spread can be nearly universal, sometimes within a matter of months, and disruption of all sectors of the society. Such a situation is called a “pandemic.” Major influenza pandemics have occurred three times during the last century, respectively in 1918 (Spanish flu), 1957 (Asian flu) and 1968 (Hong Kong flu). The 1918 pandemic was especially dramatic, causing at least 20 million deaths worldwide. Evidence shows that these new influenza pandemic strains usually originate from animal influenza viruses.

Recent experiences with highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza have given the world its first advance warning that another influenza pandemic may be imminent. Given the serious consequences of past pandemics, this advance warning has stimulated a search for ways to prevent such an event from occurring.

Adaptation and improving transmissibility are the conditions for the international spread of Avian Influenza (H5N1) virus. Highly Pathogenic H5N1 can arrive in the Caribbean as both an animal panzootic and a human pandemic. Saint Lucia is not an exception and it is timely to start the preparation of a National Plan for Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response with the commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders involved.

In 2005, two research groups published studies based on the mathematical modeling of transmission patterns that might be seen near the start of a pandemic. These studies suggested that an initial outbreak caused by an emerging pandemic virus might be contained, provided, several demanding conditions were met within a very short timeframe. In both studies, *mass administration of antiviral drugs within the outbreak zone was the cornerstone of the containment strategy*, supported by additional non-pharmaceutical measures, such as area quarantine and social distancing, aimed at reducing transmission within the area and minimizing spread beyond it. The studies further concluded that, should the containment strategy fail to

prevent the emergence of a fully transmissible pandemic virus, it could nonetheless delay international spread.

AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian Influenza (AI) or Bird Flu as it is commonly called, is a highly contagious viral disease affecting the respiratory, digestive and nervous systems of many bird species and other mammals, including man. The disease is caused by a high pathogenic (HPIA) or low pathogenic (LPAI) strain of the Type A Influenza virus, presenting mild to severe clinical/ pathological manifestations, depending on the type of viral surface antigens H and N present.

The symptoms generally associated with poultry are: sudden death without clinical signs; lack of appetite; decrease egg production; deformed eggs; swelling and cyanosis of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles and legs; nasal discharge, sneezing and coughing; in-coordination and diarrhea. Symptoms reported in humans have range from typical influenza-like symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches to conjunctivitis, pneumonia, acute respiratory distress and other severe life-threatening complications.

The influenza viruses have worldwide distribution and are frequently recovered from clinically normal seabirds and migratory waterfowls, being considered as the main source of AI outbreaks.

In recent years many pathogenic strains have caused high mortality in birds in the USA, Europe, Canada and Asia, resulting in death and destruction of millions of birds and costing the poultry industry millions of dollars. However, the H5N1 Influenza virus causing the panzootic/ pandemic in Asia, Europe, Africa, and threatening the Americas and the rest of the world, is such that the world now nervously anticipates one of its worse pandemics. The disease in animals caused by the H5N1 influenza virus has resulted in the culling of at least 150 million birds in the last two years. To date, 170 confirmed human cases which resulted in 92 deaths have been reported. According to the World Bank, this disease can cost the global economy about US\$800 billion a year.

The H5N1 virus remains for the moment an animal disease, but the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that H5N1 is a virus that has the potential to ignite a human influenza pandemic. Genetic recombination of animal and human viruses during mixed infections may give rise to pandemic strains.

According to FAO Chief Veterinary Officer, there is still a window of opportunity for substantially reducing the risk of a human pandemic evolving from H5N1 by controlling the virus at its source, in animals. Because influenza pandemics have typically caused enormous social and economic disruption, WHO is advising its member states to develop national strategies to cope with such a public health emergency, as well as coordinating with international partners to develop a comprehensive response.

It is precisely this approach that Saint Lucia has taken to effectively address the AI challenge. The Veterinary and Livestock Services Division (VLSD) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry

and Fisheries has closely collaborated with the Chief Medical Officer, the Epidemiology Unit, the Environmental Health Department and Laboratory of Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations, as a member of the National Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response Team, to develop and implement a National Avian Influenza Prevention and Response Plan.. It must be noted that SLASPA, Police, Fire Service, Immigration, Customs and NEMO are other agencies involved.

SWINE FLU

Swine Influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A Influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person to person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu, may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

Spread of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after becoming sick. In effect, an infected person can pass on the flu to someone else without showing any visible signs of carrying the virus.

Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks. Frequent hand washing will help reduce the chance becoming contaminated from these common surfaces.

Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food and are not contracted from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. However, developing the habit of practicing good hygiene can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness like influenza.

SCHOOL ACTION STEPS FOR PANDEMIC FLU

[Used with permission from Contra Costa Health Services]

The following is a chronological list of important step-by-step actions schools should take before, during and after a pandemic flu outbreak. Pandemic flu can have several cycles or waves so this list may need to be repeated.

Prior to Outbreak/Preparedness & Planning Phase

- Create a pandemic flu plan. (Use the CDC School Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist and Flow Chart given to on CD)
- Work with local health officials and emergency preparedness officials. They may want to use the schools as a way to disseminate information to families. You can begin with Parent Letter #1 in the Parent section of this binder.
- Decide the roles and responsibilities of school staff (including all ancillary staff) to prevent the spread of flu.
- If your school has a medic, train them and staff in flu-symptom recognition. (See surveillance section of this binder). Remember that a person who is infected does not show symptoms right away. But children who are getting ill may show different behavior than normal, such as eating less or being irritable.
- Insure that standard surveillance/disease recognition procedures are in place and implemented. (See surveillance section of this binder)
- Improve the hygiene of students and staff. Use simple non-medical ways to reduce the spread of flu by “cough and sneeze etiquette,” clean hands, and clean work areas. (See public information section of this binder for posters)
- Determine whether the school should be cleaned differently or more often.
- Decide to what extent you will encourage or require children and staff to stay home when they are mildly ill.
- Identify students who are most vulnerable to serious illness (immune compromised, chronic illness, etc.)

- Review the health needs of students. Some students may have a greater risk of infections. Encourage those families to talk to their health care provider. Some parents may need to be more cautious in keeping their children out of school.
- Develop alternative learning strategies such as collaborative agreements with the Nurse at the Health Centre.
- Educate staff, students and parents about: the differences between seasonal flu, bird flu and pandemic flu; best hygienic practices to prevent any sort of flu; what could occur in a pandemic. (Use the information in the public information section of this binder)

Outbreak of Flu Disease – No Reported Cases in Saint Lucia

- Conduct awareness; sensitization meetings through the entire school system
- Distribute information handouts (flyers, leaflets, etc.) to all schools
- Begin surveillance and monitor students for abnormal flu-like symptoms
- Send out Sample Parent Letter #1
- Increase infection control measures.

Outbreak of Flu Disease – Less than 10% of Students

- Begin Heightened Surveillance Reporting
- Initial Outbreak, send out Parent Letter #3, informing parents that some students are sick but schools remain open, include tip sheets and info resource list*
- Work with the Health and Education Services regarding a Press Release announcing schools remain open but parents need to prepare. [Press Release A]
- Display flu prevention signs in schools/on campus

Expansion of the Outbreak – 10% or more of students ill [but less than 30%]

- Begin Intensive Surveillance Reporting
- Send Parent Letter #4 Expanded Outbreak; include prevention tip sheets, etc.

Continued Expansion of the Outbreak – More than 30% of Students ill

- Ministry of Health Officials issues Declaration and press release closing school(s) [Press Release B]
- Close school
- Send out Parent Letter #5 School Closure, announcing closure(s)
- Cancel all non-academic events

Following the Outbreak

- Ministry of Health Officials issue declaration and press release that schools can open.
- Issue Parent Letter #6
- Continue communicating with local health department
- Return to heightened surveillance reporting

If students get sick again, start checklist again at Outbreak section.



Influenza Case Definition

[used with permission of Contra Costa Health Services]

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an influenza-like illness as having the following symptoms:

Fever of 38.6 ° Celsius [101.5° Fahrenheit] or higher
AND ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Muscle ache

A student with flu-like symptoms must be sent to the sick bay and screened by health officials. If student meets the case definition as described above, he/she must be excluded from school until symptom free.

Enter name of student on tracking log and report on the daily/weekly report form.

Forward to report to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health.



Daily Pandemic Flu Census

[Used with Permission of Contra Costa Health Services]

Once pandemic flu has been confirmed as present in Saint Lucia, use this form to report daily to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education the number of students absent with flu-like illness. (Matches the definition: fever of 38.6 ° Celsius [101.5° Fahrenheit] or higher and one of the following: cough, sore throat, headache, muscle ache)

Name of School _____ Today's Date _____

Preschool _____ Infant _____ Primary _____ Secondary _____
College _____ Other _____

Education District _____

Reporting Individual _____ Phone _____

Students

Number of students absent with flu-like illness today _____

Total number of students enrolled in your school _____

Staff/Faculty

Number of staff/faculty absent with flu-like illness today _____

Total number of staff/faculty employed in your school _____

Assistance Needed/Comments:

[Use extra paper if needed – remember School name and date at the top of the extra paper.]

**Fax this form daily during the period of Intensive Surveillance
to MoH Attn: Chief Epidemiologist 451-9039
If you have questions regarding this form or disease reporting please
call MoH/Epidemiology Department 468-5317**



Weekly Pandemic Flu Census

[Used with permission of Contra Costa Health Services]

Once pandemic flu has been confirmed as present in Saint Lucia, use this form to report weekly to the Epidemiological Department about the number of students absent with flu-like illness. (Matches the definition: fever of 38.6 ° Celsius [101.5° Fahrenheit] or higher and one of the following: cough, sore throat, headache, muscle ache)

Name of School _____

Week ending [Date] _____

Preschool _____ Infant _____ Primary _____ Secondary _____
College _____ Other _____

Education District _____

Reporting Individual _____ Phone _____

Students

Number of students absent with flu-like illness this week _____

Total number of students enrolled in your school _____

Staff/Faculty

Number of staff/faculty absent with flu-like illness this week _____

Total number of staff/faculty employed in your school _____

Assistance Needed/Comments:

[Use extra paper if needed – remember School name and date at the top of the extra paper.]

**Fax this form weekly during the period of Intensive Surveillance
to MoH Attn: Chief Epidemiologist 451-9039
If you have questions regarding this form or disease reporting please
call MoH/Epidemiology Department 468-5317**

Appendix I - SAMPLE LETTERS

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #1 - Prevention Letter

Use this letter to help prepare parents for pandemic flu – before there are human pandemic flu or bird flu cases in Saint Lucia

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter will help your family prepare for a flu pandemic that could make many people sick.

It is important to know that at this time, there is no pandemic flu of any kind in Saint Lucia. There is also no swine/North American flu in Saint Lucia at this time.

Public health officials are concerned the flu which infects people can spread easily from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic.

Public health officials are urging all persons to take all the necessary precautions to protect themselves against pandemic flu.

Here are some ways to protect your family:

- Teach your children to wash hands a lot with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.

If you have questions, please contact the Nurse at the Health Centre or your Doctor.

Together we can work to keep our children healthy.

Yours sincerely

.....
[NAME]
Principal

SCHOOL LETTER HEAD

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #2 - First Case

Use this letter to help prepare parents for pandemic flu after first case is found in Saint Lucia
Confirmation of infected persons in Saint Lucia does not signal a pandemic, there will be confusion and concern when this happens.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As expected, there are now reported cases of persons suffering from the flu virus in Saint Lucia.

Health officials have heightened surveillance and are monitoring the situation. At this point in time every effort is being made to contain the spread of the virus

It is important that you contain to practice the precautionary measures that your family has started. In addition

- Carefully monitor your children for any evidence of flu-like symptoms.
- Seek medical attention as soon as any flu-like symptoms are detected.
- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.

If you have questions, please contact the Nurse at the Health Centre or your Doctor.

Together we can work to keep our children healthy.

Yours sincerely

.....
[NAME]
Principal

SCHOOL LETTER HEAD

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #3 - Initial Pandemic Flu Outbreak

Use this letter to let parents know schools are open

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter will give you information about a flu outbreak in Saint Lucia. Health officials are reporting some persons are showing symptoms of contracting a very serious flu virus. There are also reports of students and teachers affected by the flu virus.

At this time, the Ministry of Health has indicated that students who are not ill can safely come to school. However, parents are strongly advised to keep students who are ill at home to prevent the flu from spreading.

Public health officials want you to protect yourself and your family against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness:

- It is important that you contain to practice the precautionary measures that your family has started.
- Carefully monitor your children for any evidence of flu-like symptoms.
- Seek medical attention as soon as any flu-like symptoms are detected.
- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, schools may close for days or weeks. The purpose of closing schools will be to keep children from getting sick. If schools are closed, children should stay at home. Begin planning now for childcare in your home.

Recommendations may change during the course of a pandemic flu outbreak.

If you have questions, please contact the Nurse at the Health Centre or your Doctor.

Together we can work to keep our children healthy.

Yours sincerely

.....
[NAME]
Principal

SCHOOL LETTER HEAD

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #4 - Expanded Outbreak

Use this letter to let parents know schools are open and urge ill children to stay home

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We wrote to you recently to tell you about a pandemic flu outbreak in our community. Here is some new information.

There are now even more students in our schools who are ill with this flu virus. Still the Ministry of Health advises that students who are not ill can continue to attend school. The schools will remain open. We will keep you updated with any important information.

At this time, the Ministry of Health has indicated that students who are not ill can safely come to school. However, parents are strongly advised to keep students who are ill at home to prevent the flu from spreading.

Public health officials want you to protect yourself and your family against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness and take care of your family

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu, keep them away from the people who are not sick.
- While a seriously ill person in your family waits to see a doctor the following can be done.
 - o Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
 - o Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
 - o For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, in adults, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). **Do not use aspirin with children** or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
 - o Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
 - o Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
 - o Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, schools may close for days or weeks. The purpose of closing schools will be to keep children from getting sick. If schools are closed, children should stay at home. Begin planning now for childcare in your home.

If you have questions, please contact the Nurse at the Health Centre or your Doctor.

Together we can work to keep our children healthy.

Yours sincerely

.....
[NAME]
Principal

SCHOOL LETTER HEAD

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #5 - School closure

Use this letter to inform parents that schools are closed

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As a result of the spreading pandemic, the Ministry of Health Officials have ordered the immediate closure of some schools until further notice and children should stay home. Schools may be closed for days or even weeks to reduce contact among children and stop the spread of the flu.

We know that many students and their families are very sick. We know this is a hard time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill.

This decision is necessary because the flu is easily spread from person-to-person; therefore it is not safe for large groups of people to gather. During this time, both children and adults should stay away from other people and groups as much as possible. They should not gather in other locations such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

We know that it may be hard to get a doctor's appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. Here are some tips for helping those who are sick with the flu:

- Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life- threatening illness.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

We will contact you as soon as we have information regarding the reopening of school.

Together we can work to keep our children healthy.

Yours sincerely

.....

[NAME]Principal

SCHOOL LETTER HEAD

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #6 - School Re-Opens

Use this letter to inform parents that schools are reopened.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Ministry of Health Officials have declared the pandemic flu is under control. Name of School..... will reopen on _____. At this time, students may safely return to class.

Even though school is opening, there are still some people who are sick from the flu virus and health officials say that pandemic flu outbreaks sometimes happen in waves. This means more people could become sick soon again. If more people get sick, schools may need to close again. We will continue to give you any important information.

Because the flu can still be spread from person-to-person, please keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.

We are looking forward to seeing your children again.

If you have questions, please contact the Nurse at the Health Centre or your Doctor.

Together we can work to keep our children healthy.

Yours sincerely

.....
[NAME]
Principal

Appendix II - Tips for Parents on coping with pandemic flu

Plan for an extended stay at home during a flu pandemic.

- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Ask your employer if you can work from home during a flu pandemic.
- Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income, if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand.
- Plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.

Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

Examples: Non-perishable foods

- ~Ready to eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, soups
- ~Protein or fruit bars
- ~Dry cereal or granola
- ~ Peanut butter and jelly
- ~Dried fruit, nuts, trail mix
- ~Crackers
- ~Canned juices
- ~Bottled water
- ~Canned or jarred baby food
- ~Baby formula
- ~Pet food

Health and emergency supplies

- ~Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring
- ~Soap and water or alcohol based hand wash
- ~Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin)
- ~Thermometer
- ~Vitamins
- ~Fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte®
- ~Flashlight with extra batteries
- ~Portable radio with extra batteries
- ~Manual can opener
- ~Garbage bags
- ~Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

If someone in your home develops flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches):

- ✓ Encourage plenty of fluids to drink.
- ✓ Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- ✓ For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- ✓ Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- ✓ Sponging with tepid (wrist-temperature) water lowers fever only during the period of sponging. Do not sponge with alcohol.
- ✓ Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within reach of the patient.
- ✓ All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.

- ✓ Keep other family members and visitors away from the person who is ill.
- ✓ Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

For more information, please contact the Nurse at the Health Centre or your Doctor.

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