\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School District

Pandemic Influenza Planning Policy

(to be inserted in the building level

emergency response plan)

Developed by ONC BOCES Safety and Risk Management

**Table of Contents**

I. Introduction -3-

II. School District Roles/Responsibilities -3-

III. Action Step Procedures -4-

IV. Parent Community Communication -6-

V. Additional Information Contacts -7-

Appendix A: Flow chart -8-

Appendix B: Parent Letter 1, Informational -9-

and

Pandemic Planning Checklist

Appendix C: Parent Letter 2, New Flu Strain Sickness -12-

Appendix D: Parent Letter 3, Elevated Sickness -13-

Appendix E: Parent Letter 4, School Closing -14-

Appendix F: Parent Letter 5, School Re-opening -15-

Poster - Wash Your Hands -16-

Poster - Cover Your Cough & Sneeze -17-

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The following policy has been developed to assist the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School District (District) in planning, preparation and response should an influenza pandemic occur. Included in this policy are planning and coordination steps, continuity of student learning and core operations, infection control policies and procedures, and communications planning. This is a general all-hazard pandemic plan which does not name any specific influenza strain or other communicable disease.

**II. SCHOOL DISTRICT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

*Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee:*

The District has appointed the following individuals to serve on the district’s pandemic planning committee:

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*Reporting Responsibilities:*

The school nurse will be responsible for reporting all influenza cases to the appropriate County Health officials.

In addition to the above, the Otsego Northern Catskills BOCES Safety and Risk Management service will be available to assist in the planning and preparedness phase.

**III. ACTION STEP PROCEDURES:**

*Prior to Outbreak/Preparedness and Planning Phase*:

TRAINING:

The District will be responsible for the following training and awareness components:

*Staff Training*:

School district staff will receive pandemic flu awareness and prevention training as needed during flu season and times of pandemic threat. Such training shall include specifics about flu symptom recognition, understanding methods of transmission and recommended prevention techniques for the specific threat. Additional training will be provided at the discretion of the school superintendent and may include training for the school nurse(s), staff and students.

The District will utilize the flow chart (Appendix A) in the planning and preparedness phase. The district will work closely with County Health and Emergency Officials as needed.

*Student Training/Prevention*:

All staff will work proactively to educate students on the importance of reducing the spread of germs and the various techniques that will assist in accomplishing this task.

The district will work to improve student hygiene to reduce the spread of flu through the use of non-pharmaceutical interventions such as cough and sneeze etiquette, hand washing, and cleaning work areas.

*Compromised Students:*

Some students may have a greater risk of infection. The school nurse will be responsible for identifying those students enrolled within the District who are more vulnerable to serious illness (immune compromised, chronic illness, etc.). Additionally, the school nurse will review the health needs of students. Therefore, some parents may need to be more cautious about keeping their children out of school.

*Prevention:*

All staff and students will be regularly reminded that following these simple steps can help prevent the spread of flu and other communicable diseases:

1. *Wash your hands often.*

Germs and viruses are found on frequently touched surfaces, such as keyboards, handles, doorknobs, and railings. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

1. *Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.*
2. *Avoid Close contact with people who are sick.*

Most respiratory illnesses, like flu, can be transmitted through close contact, including kissing, hugging, sharing utensils, cups, talking to someone closely, and touching someone directly. In community settings, keep at least 6 feet between you and others and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

1. *Stay home when you are sick.*

If you are not feeling well, stay home. Limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. If you need to see your healthcare provider, call ahead and let them know you are coming in. Ask for a mask to be available before entering the provider’s office, to prevent the spread.

1. *Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue.*

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands. If no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not into your hands.

1. *Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.*

*Cleaning:*

Custodial staff will have primary responsibility for cleaning and disinfecting and shall be trained in the proper and safe use of products which are appropriate for the specific threat. Commonly touched objects and surfaces shall be cleaned and disinfected at least daily during flu season. This should be done more frequently for high use areas and during times of increased threat. Commonly touched surface include but are not limited to:

* door knobs
* light switches
* faucets and fountains
* desk and table tops
* keyboards
* chromebooks/ipads
* cell phones
* lockers
* shared equipment/machinery
* interior of transportation vehicles

**IV. PARENT COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION:**

The District will communicate to parents through means of direct mail, e-mail and/or automated notification system for each of the following stages:

*Prevention:*

Prior to actual cases of human pandemic flu in the United States, the District will communicate to the parent community through means of a PREVENTION LETTER and Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals and Families (APPENDIX B) ways in which families can assist in protecting their family.

*Initial Outbreak of Pandemic Flu:*

At the outbreak of a pandemic flu disease within the District, the District will begin heightened surveillance reporting procedures. County Officials will contact the District alerting to an outbreak of flu. At this time, the district will send out Parent Letter #2 (Appendix C) which addresses the initial outbreak issues. Parents/guardians should be encouraged to keep sick children home. In addition, sick children who are sent to school will be sent home.

*Expanded Pandemic Flu Outbreak:*

With increased student illness within the District, the district will continue to encourage the parent community to keep sick children home. This will be accomplished through the Expanded Outbreak Letter #3 (APPENDIX D). Again, through this communication the parent community will be given steps to help stop the spread of germs and sickness. Additionally, this letter will communicate the possibility of school closure.

SCHOOL CLOSURE AND REOPENING COMMUNICATION

*School Closure:*

Following notification from the local or State Department of Health, the District will immediately communicate to the parent community the need to close school. This will be accomplished by means of School Closure Letter #4 (Appendix E).

*School Re-Opens:*

Once Department of Health Officials have declared that the pandemic flu is under control and that the school can re-open, the district will communicate this to the parent community through School Re-Opens Letter #5 (Appendix F).

The District will continue to monitor flu illness cases and communicate this information to the local Department of Health.

**V. ADDITIONAL POLICY INFORMATION CONTACTS**

Further information regarding this policy can be obtained by contacting

(NAME), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School District Superintendent

(PHONE) or (EMAIL)

ONC BOCES Safety and Risk Management

607.286.7715 x2606 or [jreiss@oncboces.org](mailto:jreiss@oncboces.org)

Daily pandemic influenza information and updates are available by visiting:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

**Appendix A**

# School Response to Pandemic Flu Flow Chart























**Appendix B**

Dear Parents,

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 in the United States. However, public health officials want people to protect themselves against a possible pandemic flu outbreak in our area.

Here are some ways to protect your family:

* Keep children who are sick at home. Don’t send them to school.
* Teach your children to wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
* Carry an alcohol based hand sanitizer with you to use when soap and water aren’t available.
* 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 six feet away from people who are sick.
* People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for a pandemic flu outbreak. This information can also help your family get ready for any kind of emergency.

If you have questions, please contact the School Nurse or healthcare provider.

Federal government websites

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

New York State Department of Health

<https://www.health.ny.gov/>

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org>

**Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals and Families**

You can prepare for an influenza pandemic now. You should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. This checklist will help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of a flu pandemic.

1. To plan for a pandemic:



Store a supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters.

Ask your doctor and insurance company if you can get an extra supply of your regular prescription drugs.

Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.

Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.

Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.

Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

2. To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:



Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behavior.

Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behavior.

Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Examples of food and non-perishables | Examples of medical, health, and emergency supplies |
| Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, and soups | Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment |
| Protein or fruit bars | Soap and water, or alcohol-based hand wash |
| Dry cereal or granola | Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen |
| Peanut butter or nuts | Thermometer |
| Dried fruit | Anti-diarrheal medication |
| Crackers | Vitamins |
| Canned juices | Fluids with electrolytes |
| Bottled water | Cleansing agent/soap |
| Canned or jarred baby food and formula | Flashlight |
| Pet food | Batteries |
|  | Portable radio |
|  | Manual can opener |
|  | Garbage bags |
|  | Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers |

**Appendix C Parent Letter #2**

Dear Parents,

This letter will give you information about a flu outbreak in (COUNTY). Every year, some people get sick with the flu during the fall and winter months. This year, there is a new flu virus that is making many people in (COUNTY) sick. So many people are sick locally and the United States that health officials call it a “pandemic flu”.

A lot of students and teachers in our school are sick with the flu. We hope they will all get better quickly.

At this time, the local Department of Health tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school. The schools will remain open. We will keep you updated with any important information.

To keep the flu from spreading to more people we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home.

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:

* Keep children who are sick at home. Don’t send them to school.
* 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 six feet away from people who are sick.
* People who are sick should stay home from work or school and stay away from other people until they are better.
* Stay away from shopping malls, movie theaters or other places where there are large groups of people.

If you have questions, please contact the School Nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline at (INSERT NUMBER) or call the Health Emergency Information Line: (INSERT NUMBER).

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.

**Appendix D Parent Letter #3**

Dear Parents,

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 school who are ill with this flu virus. Still the county health department tells us 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.

To keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home.

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.
* If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu and you cannot see a health provider, some thinks you can do to help them are:
  + Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
  + Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
  + 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.
  + Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
  + Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
  + 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.

Call the school at (INSERT NUMBER) or call the Health Emergency Information Line: (INSERT NUMBER)

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.

**Appendix E Parent Letter #4**

Dear Parents,

Local Public health officials have ordered all schools in (COUNTY) to close. This order is because of the pandemic flu situation in (COUNTY). All schools are immediately closed until further notice and children should stay at 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.

Because the flu is easily spread from person-to-person, 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.

For more information, call your healthcare provider or call the Health Emergency Information Line: (INSERT NUMBER).

**APPENDIX F Parent Letter #5**

Dear Parents,

(COUNTY) Public Health officials have declared the pandemic flu is under control. Our school will open again 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 five 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.



