

## Tuscaloosa County Schools

### **Pandemic Flu Plan**

#### **What is the flu?**

Flu, also called influenza, is a contagious respiratory disease. Usually influenza viruses are spread in droplets of coughs and sneezes. Flu symptoms are: fever, body aches, headache, runny nose, cough, stomach and intestinal discomfort, extreme tiredness and sore throat. Seasonal flu differs from Pandemic flu.

#### **Seasonal flu:**

- Occurs every year, usually in winter.
- For most people, it is unpleasant, but not life-threatening.
- Affects about 10% of the population.
- Annual vaccination is available for those at risk of serious illness.

#### **Pandemic flu:**

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus appears against which the human population has no immunity, resulting in several, and simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illness. With the increase in global transport and communications, as well as urbanization and overcrowded conditions, epidemics due to the new influenza virus are likely take hold around the world.

#### **Pandemic flu:**

- Occurs rarely (three times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century).
- 1918 influenza pandemic caused at least 500,000 deaths in the United States and up to 50 million worldwide.
- 1957 influenza pandemic caused at least 70,000 deaths in the United States and 1-2 million worldwide.
- 1968 influenza pandemic caused about 34,000 deaths in the United States and 700,000 deaths worldwide.
- It could be a more serious infection for everyone.
- May affect around 25% of the population.
- Vaccine would not be available in the early stages of the pandemic.

### **The Characteristics and Challenges in a Pandemic**

1. There will be rapid worldwide spread.
  - a. When a pandemic influenza virus emerges, its global spread is considered inevitable.
  - b. Preparedness activities should assume that the entire world population would be susceptible.
  - c. Countries might, through measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, delay arrival of virus, but cannot stop it.
2. Healthcare systems will be overloaded.
  - a. Most people have little or no immunity to a pandemic virus. Infection and illness rates soar. A substantial percentage of the world's population will require some form of medical care.
  - b. Nations are unlikely to have the staff, facilities, equipment, and hospital beds needed to cope with large numbers of people who suddenly fall ill.
  - c. Death rates are high, largely determined by four factors:
    - i. The number of people who become infected,
    - ii. The intensity of the virus,
    - iii. The underlying characteristic and vulnerability of the affected populations, and
    - iv. The effectiveness of preventive measures.
3. Medical supplies will be inadequate.
  - a. The need for vaccine is likely to outnumber supply.
  - b. The need for antiviral drugs is also likely to be inadequate early in the pandemic.
  - c. A pandemic can create a shortage of hospital beds, ventilators, and other supplies. Non-traditional sites, such as schools and churches, may be used as medical care sites to cope with demand.
  - d. Difficult decisions will need to be made regarding who will receive antiviral drugs and vaccines.
4. There will be economic and social disruption.
  - a. Travel bans, closing of schools and businesses, and cancellations of events could have major impact on communities and citizens.
  - b. Care for sick family members and fear of exposure can result in significant employee absenteeism.

## **Preparing for an Influenza Pandemic**

Contingency planning for an event sometime in the future is often difficult to justify, particularly in the face of limited resources and more urgent problems and priorities. However, there are two main reasons to invest in pandemic preparedness:

1. Preparation will mitigate the direct medical and economic effects of a pandemic, by ensuring that adequate measures will be taken and implemented before the pandemic occurs.
2. Preparing for the next influenza pandemic will provide benefits now, as improvements in infrastructure can have immediate and lasting benefits, and can also mitigate the effect of other epidemics or infectious disease threats.

A major component of pandemic preparedness is to strengthen the capacity to respond to yearly epidemics of influenza. A surveillance network for human and animal influenza and a targeted influenza vaccine program are the cornerstones of a national influenza policy.

The basis of every national pandemic preparedness plan should be ensuring an adequate system for alert, and response and disaster management. Depending on the available resources, more specific preparations can be made, such as developing specific contingency plans, stock-piling of antiviral medications, strengthening risk communications, investing in pandemic vaccine research and promoting domestic production of influenza vaccines.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a global influenza preparedness plan, which defines the responsibilities of WHO and national authorities in case of an influenza pandemic. This plan incorporates new scientific data and experience obtained during recent outbreaks that had pandemic potential. WHO also offers guidance tools and training to assist in the development of national pandemic preparedness plans.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed information for families, schools, and businesses on pandemic preparedness. This information includes checklists of important supplies suggested to have on hand prior to any pandemic event.

## **Mitigation and Prevention**

### **Communications:**

Communicable disease prevention information will be disseminated to faculty, staff, students, and parents through health education and in-service presentations, informational flyers, and Alabama Department of Public Health publications. Pandemic training and health education presentations for faculty and staff will be provided by system school nurses. Announcements and plans from Tuscaloosa County Schools and plans for the system's response if the pandemic should affect our schools will be based on national, state, and local government, health, and education authorities' recommendations.

### **Public Notification:**

Tuscaloosa County School System's website: [www.tcass.net](http://www.tcass.net)

STI Phone Master (where available) phone messages to each student's home phone

School Newsletters

Local radio and TV announcements

Local newspaper news releases

Letters to parents

**Staff Notification:**

Tuscaloosa County School System's website: [www.tcss.net](http://www.tcss.net)

System all-staff group email messages

Blackberry two-way talk group announcements (where available)

STI Phone Master (where available) phone messages directed to staff

Local radio and TV announcements

**Action steps:**

\_\_\_\_\_ The TCSS Pandemic Planning Committee will continue to meet routinely to monitor and continuing planning the preparedness activities of the school system. Committee members will continue to participate in community and state-level pandemic planning activities as scheduled.

\_\_\_\_\_ Posters and flyers illustrating proper procedures for "covering your cough" and proper hand washing technique sent to all buildings to be posted in highly visible areas.

\_\_\_\_\_ Reminders to always wash hands before eating placed in staff areas and lunchroom to remind teachers to provide hand washing opportunities to students.

\_\_\_\_\_ District website homepage linked to "Health Services" section *Pandemic Information* page with general pandemic information, links to flyers for "Cover your Cough" and "Be a Germ Stopper", list of school system information resources, and CDC information and [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

\_\_\_\_\_ "Pandemic Flu Planning List for Individuals and Families" sent home with each student.

\_\_\_\_\_ Articles will be placed in newsletter and in school media broadcasts regarding signs and symptoms of flu and communicable disease prevention techniques such as hand

washing, covering your cough with a tissue or coughing into arm/sleeve, and staying home when sick.

\_\_\_\_\_ Principals and supervisors will discuss healthy habits during staff meetings and in staff bulletins. Healthy habits include frequent and proper hand washing, covering your cough with a tissue or coughing into arm/sleeve, and staying home when sick.

\_\_\_\_\_ School nurses will have information available to distribute to faculty, staff, students, and parents on pandemic flu and healthy habits as requested. School nurses may be assigned to create informational bulletin board in each building.

\_\_\_\_\_ School nurses will provide pandemic flu training and in-service presentations for faculty and staff and will provide guidance and grade level-appropriate educational materials and resources to teachers regarding healthy habits and pandemic flu lessons for students.

### **Preparedness:**

The Superintendent will make the determination and/or announcement to close schools in cooperation with local, state, and national government officials. The school system will support the decision-making process by participating in flu surveillance and reporting of student and employee absenteeism according to state and local health officials' procedures.

### **Action steps:**

#### **Procedures for the schools up until the time of closure will include:**

\_\_\_\_\_ School nurses will continue to post flyers and posters as reminders of healthy habits during late fall and early winter month. Updates and information will continue to be posted on the website including on the "Health Services" section *Pandemic Flu* page with links provided on the homepage, and schools will be encouraged to post reminders in school newsletters.

\_\_\_\_\_ Schools will adequately stock latex-free gloves along with surgical masks and appropriate cleaning supplies.

\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty and staff will be reminded to continue to follow the district and local school building safety plans and the line of authority as outlined in the safety plans.

\_\_\_\_\_ Information will be sent out to all staff reminding them of flu symptoms and how to identify ill students and staff.

\_\_\_\_\_ Superintendent, principals, and school nurses will identify staff, which due to health conditions such as pregnancy or immune-compromised status, may not be present at school once the flu has been identified.

\_\_\_\_\_ Principals and supervisors will remind employees to update emergency contact information.

\_\_\_\_\_ Custodial staff will be reminded to follow the Infection Control Plan and appropriate cleaning procedures/checklists. Personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies will continue to be provided to custodial staff.

## **Response:**

### **Action steps:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Students exhibiting flu symptoms will be kept in a separate location from other health room users. Parents or emergency contacts will be called to pick up the student immediately.

\_\_\_\_\_ School nurses will keep a record of students and staff exhibiting flu symptoms and that are sent home. Flu symptoms are: fever, body aches, headache, runny nose, cough, stomach and intestinal discomfort, extreme tiredness, and sore throat. School nurses will report all cases of flu symptoms to the principal and school nurse supervisor. School nurse supervisors will provide the Lead Nurse with a flu surveillance report via email each day.

\_\_\_\_\_ Parents will be asked to report incidences of the flu when reporting absences for their children.

\_\_\_\_\_ Updates will be given to staff on a regular basis regarding the extent of infection at the schools and potential changes that may take place. This update will be provided by principal or his/her designee.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tuscaloosa County Schools will provide information and updates to parents on prevention procedures and information as to the schools status-open, closed, and if closed when school will resume, using the existing and aforementioned public notification procedures and resources.

\_\_\_\_\_ In the event of school closing, teachers will update daily assignments on their webpage on the school's website and on STI Home.

\_\_\_\_\_ In the event of Pandemic influenza, all facilities and all extra-curricular activities and scheduled athletic events will be closed or canceled on a system-wide, if not state-wide basis.

## Recovery

### Action steps:

\_\_\_\_\_ Counseling services will be provided, if necessary, for students and staff. Counselors will have materials available to assist students and staff coping with grief and stress.

\_\_\_\_\_ School nurses will continue to monitor flu-like symptoms and report them to the principal and school nurse supervisor.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Lead Nurse will continue to collect system-wide data regarding flu-like symptoms from the school nurse supervisors, and report them to the appropriate local health officials.

\_\_\_\_\_ School nurses will monitor for the cumulative effects of stress on caregivers such as principals, central office staff, counselors, fellow nurse co-workers and other crisis team responders.

\_\_\_\_\_ De-briefing meetings will be held by the Pandemic Flu Committee to document lessons learned and incorporate them into revisions to this plan and future trainings.

Sources: Adapted from Shelby County School Pandemic Flu Plan (draft ), 10/2007, CDC website, [www.cdc.gov/pandemic](http://www.cdc.gov/pandemic) , [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), ADPH website, [www.adph.org/pandemicflu](http://www.adph.org/pandemicflu) .