

Pandemic Response Planning Checklist for Homeless & Housing Services Providers

This checklist will help you to plan your response to an influenza pandemic, as it might affect your program or facility. The checklist is divided into three sections:

1. Section 1 deals with **Service Continuity Planning**. Critical to your response is your ability to continue to provide services. A service continuity plan, developed to respond to a pandemic, will help you prepare for other disease outbreaks or emergencies.
2. Section 2 deals with **infection control** and details practical ways in which you can prevent the spread of influenza among your clients, staff and volunteers.
3. Section 3 deals with issues that are specific to an **influenza pandemic** or other widespread, serious disease outbreak.

Refer to the Vancouver Coastal Health Pandemic Response Plan at: www.vch.ca/pandemic.

Specific chapters of the plan that you may find useful are:

Chapter 4: Infection Control: http://www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/ch04_infection_control.pdf

Chapter 12: Handling the Deceased: http://www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/ch12_handling_deceased.pdf

Another tool that you may find helpful is the VCH self-care guide for pandemic and seasonal influenza.

“Look after yourself: how to care for yourself and the people you care about” is available at:

http://www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/Look_after_yourself.pdf

1. Service Continuity Planning

- An influenza pandemic will cause disruption throughout society for several months. All areas of society will be affected; it may be difficult to get some goods or services.
 - It is expected that large numbers of people will become ill and may be away from work. 15-25% of your staff and volunteers may be absent at any one time.
 - A service continuity plan will help you maintain your facility's essential services in the face of staff and volunteer absenteeism.
- Have you identified your essential services? Include payroll, systems maintenance, communications systems, support services as well as client services. What services may be more important in a pandemic?
 - What services can you discontinue/postpone? Identify services that may be postponed or discontinued during a pandemic in order to free up staff and volunteer resources to provide essential services.
 - Consider how you will maintain your essential services when you don't have enough staff or volunteers. Staff or volunteers may stay home from work because they are ill or to take care of family members or out of fear.
 - Identify supplies and equipment that are essential to the provision of your services. How will you deal with disruptions to the supply chain? Are there supplies that you can stockpile for use in a pandemic? Consider building a 6-weeks' stockpile of essential items for use or distribution during a pandemic. Remember to rotate supplies that have an expiry date.
 - Do you have policies to cover when staff and volunteers who become ill with influenza may return to work? It is important to enable those who are sick to recover fully; people will be contagious until their symptoms have resolved. Once someone has recovered from pandemic influenza, they will be immune to the disease.

- ❑ Do you have procedures to deal with staff or volunteers who become ill at work? See: http://www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/ch04_infection_control.pdf
- ❑ Have you designated someone to co-ordinate pandemic planning and to produce a written Service Continuity/Pandemic Plan?
- ❑ Have you designated someone to co-ordinate staff and volunteer training and education about pandemic influenza? “Look after yourself: how to care for yourself and the people you care about”, the VCH self-care guide for pandemic and seasonal influenza will provide staff and volunteers with basic information that will be useful to them to know in the event of a pandemic or during flu season. “Look after yourself” is available at: http://www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/Look_after_yourself.pdf
- ❑ Have you made efforts to share your pandemic planning with sister agencies providing similar or complementary services, so as to maximize the benefit from your collective efforts?

2. Infection Control

- Infection control measures will be important in the prevention of influenza transmission during a pandemic.
 - Influenza is spread by virus contained in droplets generated when someone infected with the disease coughs or sneezes and doesn't cover their mouth.
 - These droplets may be inhaled by people standing close to the infected person.
 - The droplets may also fall out of the air and settle on surfaces where the virus can be picked up by someone touching the contaminated surface. The virus can survive on hard surfaces for 24 hours or longer.
 - If that person then touches their nose or mouth or eyes, they may become infected with influenza.
 - Proper and frequent handwashing has been shown to reduce transmission of respiratory infections by up to 40%. Handwashing will be the most important means of preventing the spread of the disease until a vaccine is developed.
 - Ensure that staff and volunteer education includes infection control measures.
 - Stay home if you are ill.
- ❑ Have you provided staff and volunteers with training in cough/sneeze etiquette? See: http://www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/ch04_infection_control.pdf

A “Cover your cough” poster is available at: http://www.vch.ca/flu/docs/Cover_Your_Cough.pdf

- ❑ Plan to stockpile and provide soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues and receptacles for their disposal. Posters on proper handwashing using soap and water and on the use of hand sanitizers are available at:

How to wash your hands: http://www.vch.ca/flu/docs/Hand_Washing.pdf

How to use a hand sanitizer: http://www.vch.ca/flu/docs/Hand_Sanitizing.pdf

- ❑ Are your cleaning staff and other staff and volunteers aware of the need, during a pandemic, for more frequent disinfection of surfaces that are touched often, such as door knobs, handrails, computers, bathroom faucets and telephones? A solution of 1 part household bleach to 9 parts water (10% bleach solution) is an effective disinfectant that will kill the influenza virus.
- ❑ Try to maintain a metre's distance between yourself and others. Avoid groups and refrain from kissing, hugging and shaking hands during an influenza pandemic.

3. Pandemic Preparedness

During a pandemic, it will be important to know where to find accurate, trustworthy and up-to-date information about influenza and what to do in response. Vancouver Coastal Health will open a portal on our website to provide such information and will provide regular updates to newspapers, radio and television stations. Refer to www.vch.ca.

- ❑ One way to reduce the spread of influenza is to reduce social mobility. Can you work collaboratively with other agencies who provide similar services to reduce social mobility during a pandemic and ensure the provision of essential services to marginalized populations?
- ❑ If you provide meals, can you provide one full meal and meal supplements (bars, Ensure, sandwiches) for clients to take away so that clients don't have to go from agency to agency to get enough to eat?
- ❑ Are there other services that can be grouped to reduce client mobility during a pandemic? The chances of disease transmission are increased in highly mobile populations.
- ❑ If you provide shelter or housing services, can you make provisions to maintain at least one metre separation between clients? Can you accommodate clients ill with the flu in an area separate from clients who are not ill?
- ❑ During a pandemic, emergency and funeral services will be challenged to provide even basic services. If a client should die in your facility of suspected influenza, first call a funeral home. If funeral homes are overwhelmed, they will provide you with a number to call for collection and disposal of the deceased. Be aware of ethnic and cultural diversity when dealing with the deceased. Refer to the VCH Regional Pandemic Response Plan, Chapter 12, Handling the Deceased, for a listing of funeral homes in VCH and their contact numbers:
http://www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/ch12_handling_deceased.pdf.



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