



NHCS

*Great Expectations.
Every School, Every Child.*

**NEW HANOVER COUNTY
SCHOOLS
PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLAN**

Revised 10/22/2010



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Introduction

Seasonal influenza is a highly contagious disease that causes an average of 36,000 deaths annually in the United States and more than 220,000 **hospitalizations**. It is caused by different strains of the influenza virus that circulate throughout the world. Usually strains are different year to year although in some years there is an overlay of a previous year's strain. Historically, the largest waves of seasonal flu occur in the fall and winter, but a pandemic cannot be predicted with certainty. In fact the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic began in early spring but accelerated rapidly thru the summer months and into fall.

Occasionally viral strains mutate causing a major shift in the genetic composition and resulting in what is known as a **novel virus**. A novel virus is one that most, if not all, people in the world have never been exposed to and therefore have no immunity. If the new strain acquires the ability to be efficiently transmitted from person to person widespread regional or global illness, a pandemic, may result.

During the 20th century, three separate pandemics occurred, each spreading around the world within a year. The influenza pandemic of 1918, also known as the "**Spanish Flu**" was especially virulent, killing a large number of young, otherwise healthy adults. The pandemic caused more than 500,000 deaths in the United States and more than 50 million deaths around the world. Subsequent pandemics in 1957–58 and 1968-69 caused far fewer fatalities in the United States, but still resulted in significant illness and death around the world.

In 2009, H1N1 influenza was determined to be a novel strain that most likely originated in North America during the early spring and spread to other parts of the world rapidly. A worldwide pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in July, 2009 and continued into the winter of 2010. Although the pandemic proved to be mild even when compared to seasonal influenza several important observations were made. There was significant impact for pregnant women. Pregnant women make up 1% of the US population yet they accounted for 7% of H1N1 deaths. The death rate among children also more than doubled previous years' seasonal influenza deaths; secondary bacterial infections were a significant factor.

The single most effective weapon we have so far in the fight against influenza remains the annual seasonal influenza vaccine. Influenza vaccine is produced from the three most prominent strains that circulated worldwide during the previous year. The vaccine is



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recommended for anyone over 6 months of age and pregnant women whose unborn babies receive protection in utero that remains effective after birth.

Comparison of Impact of Moderate vs. Severe Influenza Pandemic in the U.S.

Characteristic	Moderate (1959/68-like)		Severe (1918 – like)	
	US	North Carolina	US	North Carolina
Illness	90 Million	2,989,442	90 Million	2,989,442
Outpatient Care	45 Million	1,594,655	45 Million	1,594,655
Hospitalization	865,000	35,252	9,900,000	289,762
Deaths	209,000	7,949	1,903,000	65,334

Calculated using NC total population of 8,541,263. Both scenarios are based on a clinical attack rate of 35%.

Source: NC Pandemic Flu Plan (February 2007).

http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/pandemic/Introduction_2007.pdf

There are several characteristics of influenza pandemic that differentiate it from other public health emergencies:

- Influenza has the potential to suddenly cause illness in a very large number of people, who could easily overwhelm the health care system throughout the region and the nation.
- A pandemic outbreak could jeopardize essential community services by causing high levels of absenteeism in critical positions in every workforce.
- Based on current technology it is likely that vaccines against the new virus will not be available for up to six months following the emergence of the new virus.
- Basic services, such as health care, law enforcement, fire, emergency response, communications, transportation, public schools and utilities, could be disrupted during a pandemic.



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- The increased stress from a potential pandemic or actual pandemic will also increase the mental health service needs throughout the schools and community.
- Finally, the pandemic could last for many weeks or even months.



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Purpose

Schools tend to be affected by outbreaks more than other settings because their occupants—primarily children—easily transmit illnesses to one another as a result of their close proximity and their inefficiency at containing droplets from their coughs and sneezes. Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughs and sneezes from infected individuals. People may also become infected by touching something with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. According to the CDC school-aged children are the group with the highest rates of flu illness.

In addition, a significant number of people in our communities are connected to our public school system. It is estimated nationally that approximately one fifth or 55 million people including students, teachers, administrators, parents and other employees interact with our public schools daily in the United States.

Considering the epidemiology of pandemic influenza lengthy and widespread absenteeism could result. In a worse-case scenario, a pandemic may severely affect schools causing a ripple effect that disrupts families and businesses in the community. On the other hand closing schools early and curtailing after-school activities may delay an epidemic peak, allowing community medical and other resources to catch up which may help mitigate the pandemic's severity for families and businesses.

The PHRST 2 Team and the New Hanover County Schools Crisis Committee developed this Pandemic Influenza Plan in an effort to minimize the impact of a pandemic on the local public education system. This plan is in accordance with federal, state, and local guidance and coordinates with plans of community partners to meet the following goals:

- Limit the number of illnesses and deaths
- Preserve continuity of essential school functions
- Minimize educational and social disruption
- Minimize economic and academic loss



Planning Assumptions

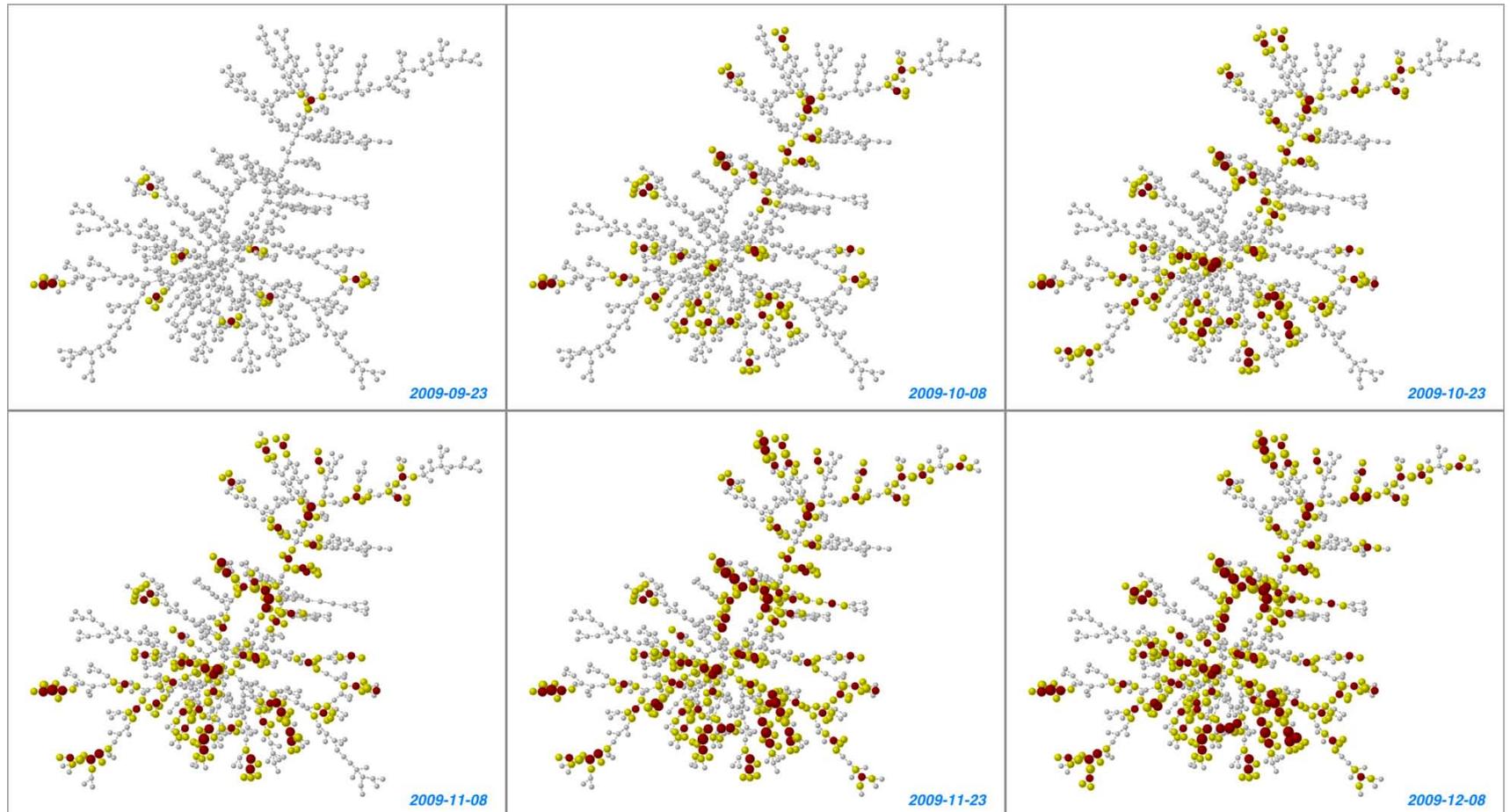
- An influenza pandemic will result in the rapid spread of the infection with outbreaks locally and regionally. Communities across the region will be impacted simultaneously.
- There will be a need for heightened local and regional surveillance of flu symptoms and infection rates.
- There could be significant disruption of public and privately owned critical infrastructure including transportation, commerce, utilities, public safety and communications.
- The clinical attack rate may likely be 30% or higher in the overall population. Illness rates will be highest among school aged children (about 40%) and decline with age.
- Persons who become ill may shed virus and can transmit infection one day before the onset of illness and up to 7 days after the onset of symptoms. Viral shedding and the risk of transmission will be greatest during the first 2-3 days of illness. Children usually shed the greatest amount of virus shed viruses for up to 10 – 14 days. Therefore children are likely to pose the greatest risk for transmission.
- Most influenza viruses live for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on a surface which poses a risk for infection for those coming in contact with infected surfaces.
- On average, infected persons will transmit infection to approximately two other people. (Fig 1) Multiple waves of illness could occur with each wave lasting as long as 2-3 months. Historically, the largest waves have occurred in the fall and winter, but the seasonality of a pandemic cannot be predicted with certainty. In fact the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic began in early spring but accelerated rapidly thru the summer months and into fall.



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Progression of Flu within network of friends

Figure1



Citation: Christakis NA, Fowler JH (2010) Social Network Sensors for Early Detection of Contagious Outbreaks. PLoS ONE 5(9): e12948. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0012948

Each frame shows the largest component of the network (714 people) for a specific date, with each line representing a friendship nomination and each node representing a person. Infected individuals are colored red, friends of infected individuals are colored yellow, and node size is proportional to the number of friends infected.



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- It is anticipated that the school district will need to plan to function with a total of 30% work force absentee rate for the entire pandemic outbreak. If staff absenteeism is sufficient to warrant the administrative closure of the school or district, the administrative procedures for temporary school closures are to be followed. (Appendix ____)
- It is established that infectious disease outbreaks many times begin or accelerate in schools. Consequentially, NHCS may close schools early in an event to prevent widespread contagion throughout the community.
- There are many interrelated factors to take into consideration when deciding whether or not to close a school. School closing as a mitigation strategy is only effective if those who are ill go home and stay there for a minimum of 2 days in combination with curtailment of all extracurricular social activities and closure of daycare centers. School travel restrictions into and out of the community should also be encouraged. In the absence of school closure widespread use of influenza vaccination should be encouraged as well as teaching and modeling preventive measures.
- School closings will only be implemented at the time of the event based on the characteristics of the pandemic.
- New Hanover County will not be able to rely on mutual aid resources, State or Federal assistance to support local response efforts. Antiviral medications may be in extremely short supply. Local supplies of antiviral medications will be prioritized by New Hanover County Health Department.
- Due to vaccine production and distribution constraints, a vaccine for the pandemic influenza strain will likely not be available for up to 6 months following the emergence of a novel virus.
- Insufficient supplies of vaccines and antiviral medicines will place greater emphasis on social distancing strategies to control the spread of the disease in the county.
- Social distancing strategies aimed at reducing the spread of infection such as closing community centers, and other public gather points and canceling public events may be implemented during a pandemic.
- Coordination of disease control strategies will be especially important locally and throughout the region due to the mobility of the population.



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Authorities

Legislation is the basis for the authority to curtail social activities including public school during public health emergencies such as pandemic influenza. The following is a brief summary.¹

Authorities for Social Distancing, Cancellations and Closures		
Official with Authority	Geographic Area	Communicable Diseases Covered by the Authority
Governor NC GS14-288.15. NC GS 14-288.19. NC GS 166A-5. NC GS 166A-6.	Statewide	Social distancing and other measures may be implemented by the governor to maintain order during a declaration of a state of emergency or disaster anywhere in the state.
Local Elected Officials: County (Chair, County Commissioners) NC GS 14-288.13. NC GS 153A-121. NC GS 153A-122.	Unincorporated area of the County (unless a Municipality elects to come under the coverage of a County Ordinance).	Social distancing and other measures may be implemented to maintain order during a county declaration of a state of emergency or disaster.
Local Elected Officials: Municipal (Mayor) NC GS 14-288.12. NC GS 160A-175. NC GS 160A-174.	Within the borders of the city or town.	Social distancing and other measures may be implemented to maintain order during a Municipal declaration of a state of emergency or disaster.
Local Board of Education NCGS 115C-84.2. NCGS115C-47.	Public schools in the school system governed by the Local Board of Education.	Local Boards of Education are empowered to set the school calendar under these statutes. However, if school buildings are owned by the City or County, then elected officials can also close schools during a declared state of emergency. (Does not apply if the Local Board of Education owns the school property).

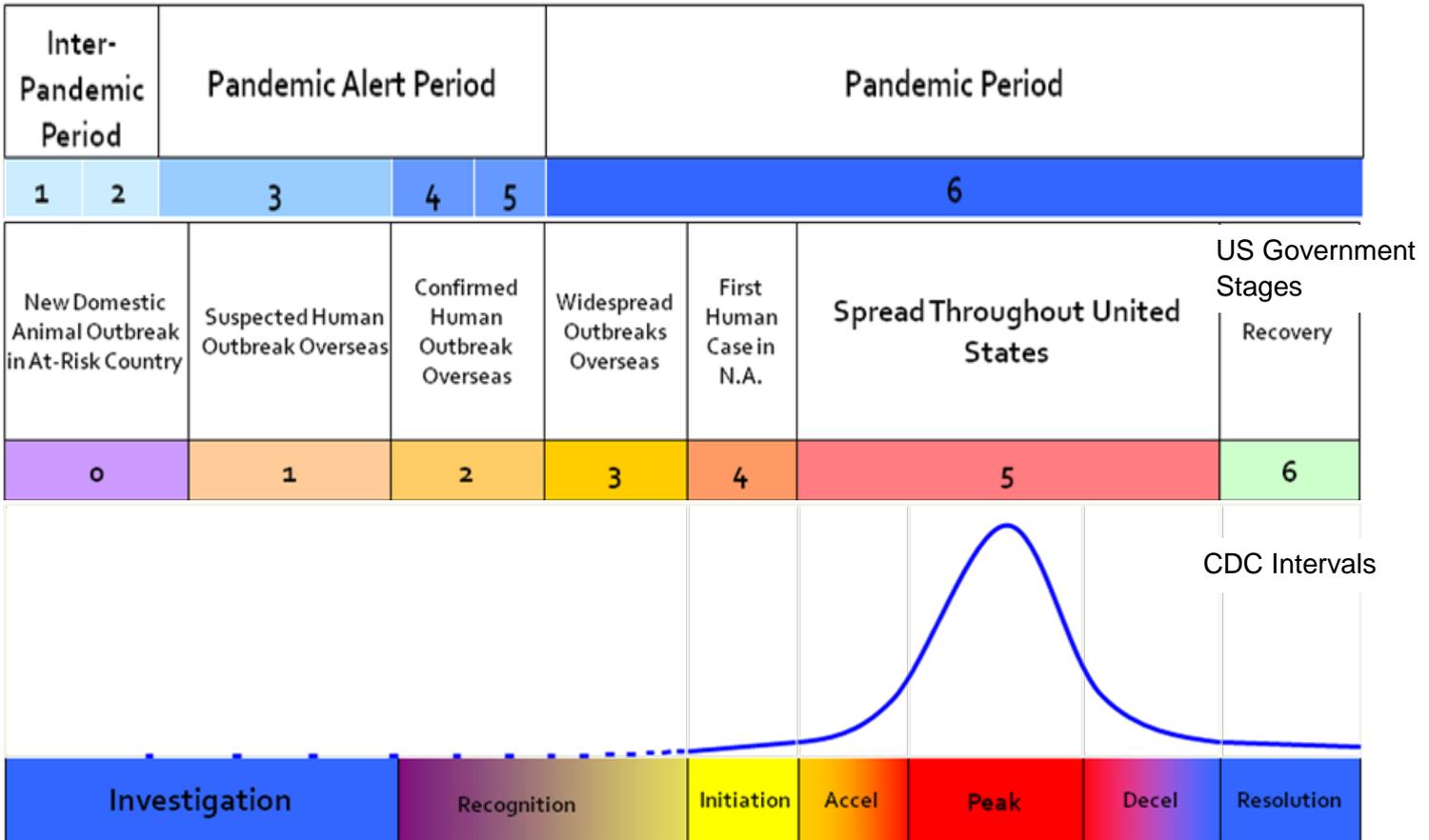
¹ See Appendix B for Complete List of Authorities.



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Phases of a Pandemic

The CDC uses a series of six phases of pandemic alert as a system for categorizing the seriousness of the threat and the need to launch progressively more intense preparedness activities. Each phase of alert is based on local or regional observations and coincides with a series of recommended preparedness activities. Progression from one phase to the next is triggered by the epidemiological behavior of the disease and the characteristics of circulating virus. The graphic below depicts CDC pandemic intervals compared to US Government Pandemic Response Stages.





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Model epidemic or pandemic curves can be used to describe likely events over time and may be valuable for anticipating conditions and identifying key actions that could be taken at certain points in time to alter the epidemic or pandemic curve. For the purposes of novel A influenza response, CDC uses seven intervals to represent the sequential units of time that occur along a hypothetical pandemic curve. Use of the intervals to describe the progression of an epidemic within communities provides a more granular framework for defining when to respond with various actions and interventions especially during U.S. Government stages 4, 5, and 6.

The intervals serve as additional points of reference within the phases and stages to provide a common orientation and better epidemiologic understanding of what is taking place and when to intervene. The intervals are also a valuable means for communicating the status of the epidemic by quantifying different levels of disease, and linking status with triggers for interventions locally. Different locales may experience intervals at different times.

Definitions of the Intervals:

“Investigation” Interval – Investigation of Novel Influenza Cases: Sporadic cases of novel influenza are occurring. Public health actions should focus on routine surveillance and epidemiologic investigations to identify human cases and assess the potential for the strain to cause significant disease in humans, investigations of animal outbreaks to determine any human health implications, and case-based control measures (i.e., antiviral treatment and isolation of cases and antiviral prophylaxis of contacts).

“Recognition” Interval – Recognition of Efficient and Sustained Transmission: Clusters of cases of novel influenza virus in humans are identified and sustained and efficient human-to-human transmission is confirmed. Public health actions should concentrate on containment of the outbreak, focusing on case-based control measures, including isolation and treatment of cases and voluntary quarantine of contacts. However, addition of rapid implementation of community-wide antiviral prophylaxis may be attempted to fully contain an emerging epidemic.

“Initiation” Interval – Initiation of the Epidemic Wave: The first human case(s) of novel influenza A (H1N1) is identified in North Carolina. Continued implementation for case-based



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control measures (i.e., isolation and treatment of cases, prophylaxis and quarantine of contacts) is essential, along with enhanced surveillance for detecting additional or potential cases of the epidemic strain to determine when community mitigation interventions will be implemented.

“Acceleration” Interval – Acceleration of the Epidemic Wave: Public health officials identify that containment efforts have not succeeded and onward transmission is occurring. Immediate initiation of community mitigation activities such as school and childcare closures, social distancing, and the efficient management of public health resources will be of primary importance. Isolation and treatment of cases along with voluntary quarantine of contacts will continue as a key mitigation measure.

“Peak/Established Transmission” Interval – Transmission is Established and Peak of the Epidemic Wave: Extensive transmission in the community and state reaches its greatest number of newly identified cases. The healthcare system is overburdened. To reduce the societal effects of the epidemic and maintain critical infrastructure, utilization of available resources should be optimized.

“Deceleration” Interval – Deceleration of the Epidemic Wave: The rates of epidemic infection are declining, providing an opportunity to begin planning for appropriate suspension of community mitigation activities and recovery. Local health officials may choose to rescind community mitigation intervention measures within their jurisdiction, as appropriate, when new cases are not occurring or occur very infrequently.

“Resolution” Interval – Resolution of the Epidemic Wave: Epidemic novel influenza cases are occurring only sporadically. Primary actions should focus discontinuing all community mitigation interventions, facilitating the recovery of the public health, healthcare, and community infrastructure, resuming enhanced surveillance protocols to detect possible subsequent waves, and preparing for next waves, should they occur.



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Public Health Goals	NHCS Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen influenza pandemic preparedness at all levels. Closely monitor human and animal surveillance data. – Minimize the risk of transmission to humans; detect and report such transmission rapidly if it occurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure that all staff members and students are trained in preventative measures such as respiratory etiquette and universal precautions. – Ensure that staff members understand detection and reporting guidelines and report rapidly as required to appropriate school officials.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure rapid characterization of the new virus subtype and early detection, notification and response to additional cases. – Contain the new virus within limited foci or delay spread to gain time to implement preparedness measures, including vaccine development. – Maximize efforts to contain or delay spread to possibly avert a pandemic, and to gain time to implement response measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure all personnel are knowledgeable about most current epidemiological information. – Review and update school continuity of operation plans. – Ensure that best practices for infection detection and control measures are followed. – Staff/faculty model respiratory etiquette/proper hand-washing. – Ensure adequate supplies of liquid soap, running water and paper towels for staff/student protection. – Implement best practice for social distancing per NHCHD guidance, including reducing the school activity calendar. – Maximize communications with parents related to health and safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implement response measures including social distancing to minimize pandemic impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase surveillance of staff/student health and attendance and implement administrative procedures to ensure adequate staffing for essential business and school functions. – Follow recommended social distancing measures. – Ensure maximum support and education for ill and affected students.



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Concept of Operations

I. Overview

- A. Each public school will operate in accordance with this NHCS Pandemic Influenza Plan.
- B. In coordination with the NHCHD, NHCS will implement procedures that increase the health and safety of the school community.
- C. Then New Hanover County Schools will:
 1. Implement non-medical measures, to decrease the spread of disease throughout the school community as guided by the epidemiology of the pandemic and the NHCHD.
 - Encourage students, parents, and staff to get a yearly influenza vaccine.
 - Encourage students, parents, and staff to take everyday preventative actions to stop the spread of germs.
 - Teach students and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue of their arm.
 - Provide adequate supplies within each reach, including tissues and no-touch trash cans.
 - Encourage hand hygiene among students and staff through education, handwashing time, and the provision of supplies.
 - Encourage students and staff to keep their hands away from their nose, mouth and eyes.
 - Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick through education and policy.
 - Encourage routine surface cleaning through education, policy and the provision of supplies.
 - Each day, routinely clean surfaces and objects that are touched often , such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on-learning items, faucet handles, and phones. Empty trash cans frequently.
 - Provide adequate cleaning supplies and instruct that additional disinfection beyond normal routine cleaning is not recommended.
 - Place disinfecting wipes in classrooms, and encourage students and staff to wipe down frequently-touched surfaces and objects before each use.
 - Implement the NHCS Continuity of Operations Protocol as specified in the NHCS Crisis Management Plan. A copy of the plan is located at the main office in each school, at the NHCS Superintendent's Office, and at the NHCS Safety Office.



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- Under guidance of the NHCHD, educate the school community about approved public health practices and what each person can do to prepare or respond to minimize health risks.
- Provide educational support for students who are isolated or quarantined.
- Implement the recovery protocol as specified in the NHCS Crisis Management Plan that provides for educational support.

II. Direction and Control

- A. NHCS will operate under NIMS the Incident Command System throughout the duration of the pandemic response as outlined in the NHCS Crisis Management Plan. The NHCS may activate its EOC, which is located at 2814 Carolina Beach Road, during a pandemic to coordinate the response. (Appendix)

III. Risk Communication

- A. The dissemination of information will be prioritized by the school system depending on the pandemic interval.
- B. School Nurses may maintain health information web pages to educate parents, students and staff on pertinent health issues.
- C. Information may be disseminated via parent letters, school newsletters, television, radio broadcasts, and AlertNow communication system.
- D. Each school will identify hard-to-reach families and ensure communication is made in the home language.
- E. Template pandemic informational letters, including translations, will be used to communicate with parents/guardians and staff. (Appendix C)
- F. Common health messages and educational materials in multiple languages will be coordinated with the NHCHD.
- G. Upon activation of the NHCS EOC, NHCS PIO will participate in the Emergency Public Information Center (EPIC) to coordinate the provision of consistent, accurate, and timely public information.
- H. In coordinate with the EPIC, the NHCS PIO will evaluate the need to establish a school information call center to respond to public inquiries.



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IV. Operations

A. Surveillance

1. Surveillance During Pandemic Intervals 1-3:

- New Hanover County schools will report absenteeism of 10% or more of the school population (staff, faculty and students) each week on a voluntary basis during the seasonal flu season, November through April. Weekly reports will be sent to the local health department and NCDPI.
- In a suspect outbreak, NHCS will electronically send daily aggregate attendance data to the NHCHD Communicable Disease Department to analyze trends that might augment the data from the sentinel reporting system.

2. Surveillance During Pandemic Intervals 4-6:

- Each school will closely monitor and report attendance and data trends when student absentee rates rise above 10%.
- Daily reports will be sent to the local health department and NCDPI.
- The NHCS Human Resources Department will activate tracking of absenteeism for all employees and report trends to the NHCS Superintendent of his designee.
- Surveillance data will be used to identify staffing needs and make informed school closure decisions. (See Authorities, Appendix B)

B. Mitigation

Mitigation activities are taken in advance of an influenza pandemic to prevent or temper its impact. Mitigation efforts will occur primarily during the early pandemic intervals.

The presence of overlapping authorities will necessitate close communication and coordination between elected leaders, state officials, the local health director, and local school administrators to ensure decisions and response actions are clear and consistent. There are two state statutes that give both the state and local health directors and the State Board of Education the authority to close schools, GS 130A-145 and GS 115C-84.2 subsection (c). (Appendix B)

1. Planning Actions during Pandemic Intervals 1-3:

- Review and update NHCS continuity plans and assure essential functions are adequately staffed.
- Evaluate and revise the NHCS Pandemic Influenza Plan as necessary.



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- Train and equip NHCS staff to assure competencies and capacities needed to respond to a pandemic outbreak.
- Maintain strategic partnerships with local community health care institutions and providers, and local response agencies and their staff.
- Review education for staff, students, and parents about flu prevention measures. Best practices for respiratory hygiene will be reviewed for staff during annual training.

2. Planning Actions during Pandemic Intervals 4-6:

- Review individual school response plans that identify school chain of command in case of illness (Quick Reference Guides are located in each school classroom).
- Review and update individual school chain of command lists including two backups for each position.
- Review procedures for sending ill individuals home and educate staff/parents about them.
- Inform schools about potential impacts of an influenza pandemic on essential services and city, county, and school infrastructure.
- Document actions taken.

3. Social Distancing Strategies During Intervals 1-3:

- NHCS will communicate with community partners regarding the use of using social distancing strategies, associated impacts and the process for implementing these measures, including identifying triggers for implementation.
- NHCS will reinforce respiratory hygiene and infection control practices for staff, students, parents and anyone else having regular contact with the school population.

4. Social Distancing Strategies During Intervals 4-6:

- NHCS will coordinate with community partners to make decisions for implementing social distancing strategies consistent with the severity of illness and local impact of the pandemic.
- NHCS will follow NHCHD guidelines as ordered, including social distancing and emergency pandemic staffing plans.

V. Continuity of Operations

- A. The NHCS Crisis Management Plan includes a Continuity of Operations Plan (COO Plan).



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- B. The NHCS Human Resources Policy can be found on the New Hanover County Schools website: <http://www.nhcs.net/humanresources/handbook.htm> and includes the following:
 - 1. Staff policies for personal illness or care of family
 - 2. Policies for flexible work hours and working from home
 - 3. Procedures for the reassignment of employees to support mission essential services
- C. The New Hanover County Schools Superintendant will determine the appropriate time to implement the Continuity of Operations Plan.

VI. Recovery

- A. School recovery from an influenza pandemic will begin when school officials determine that normal supplies, resources and response systems can manage ongoing school activities.
- B. NHCS will assess the economic and educational impact of the pandemic.
- C. Recovery operations will depend on the severity and duration of the pandemic.
- D. NHCHD will recommend specific actions to be taken to return to schools and district offices to pre-event status including environmental sanitation.



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Appendix A: Acronyms

CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COO	Continuity of Operations
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPIC	Emergency Public Information Center
NCGS	North Carolina General Statute
NHC	New Hanover County
NHCHD	New Hanover County Health Department
NHCS	New Hanover County Schools
NIMS	National Incident Management System
PHRST	Public Health Regional Surveillance Team
PIO	Public Information Officer
WHO	World Health Organization



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Appendix B: Authorities

1. **Authorities**

1.1. **Legal Authorities for Pandemic Response**

1.1.1. Various federal, state and local public officials have the legal authority to implement measures to protect public health and safety and control the spread of disease during an influenza pandemic. In North Carolina, these legal authorities reside with both elected and appointed officials, including the Governor, State and Local Health Directors, County Commissioners, Municipal Mayors, and Local Boards of Education. In some instances, these officials have overlapping authorities, which makes it imperative that they remain in close communication, so that implementation of disease controls can be managed quickly and efficiently. It is also important that these individuals understand their powers as relates to pandemic response (as well as the limits to those authorities) so that decisions and response actions are coordinated, and consistent with established public health policy, as well as national and state and guidelines for control of pandemic influenza.

1.1.2. The following authorities apply to protection of public health and infectious disease control for humans.

1.1.3. Additional information on Statutory Authority to Address for Pandemic Influenza can also be found in the NC Pandemic Plan at http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/pandemic/AppendixL1_2007.pdf

1.2. **Quarantine and Isolation Authority**

1.2.1. **Federal** quarantine and isolation falls under the authority of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and specifically the Surgeon General (with the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services). According to U.S. Code, Title 42, 264-272, the Surgeon General can use quarantine and isolation to prevent the introduction, transmission, and spread of communicable diseases from foreign countries into the States or possessions, or from one state or possession to another. This authority



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can be exercised to detain an individual, order them to undergo a medical examination, or to conditionally release a person with a communicable disease.

1.2.1.1. Executive Order (EO) 13295 lists Communicable Diseases subject to federal detention, isolation, and quarantine, in order to prevent the introduction, transmission or spread from foreign countries into the U.S. Flu viruses likely to cause a pandemic are included in EO 13295.

1.2.1.2. For more information on Federal Quarantine and Isolation see; <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/lawsand.htm>

1.2.2. *State Quarantine and Isolation Authority:* Under NC General Statute (NC GS) 130A-145, the State Health Director is empowered to exercise quarantine and isolation authority anywhere in the state to control the spread of communicable disease.

1.2.3. *Local Quarantine and Isolation Authority:* Under NC GS 130A-145, the Local Health Director's authority extends only to the county served by the New Hanover County Health Department.

1.2.4. The authority to enact quarantine or isolation is not contingent on the proclamation of an emergency or disaster by the Governor, a County Executive, or a Municipal Mayor.

1.3. NC General Statutes for Quarantine and Isolation

1.3.1. NC GS 130A-145. Empowers the State or Local Health Director to exercise quarantine and isolation authority for a period of up to 30 days, so long as public health is endangered, all other means for correcting the problems have been exhausted, and no less restrictive alternative exists. It also outlines legal procedures for individuals to challenge a quarantine or isolation order and specifies that quarantine and isolation can only be used for diseases and conditions for which quarantined and isolation are acceptable disease control measures.



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- 1.3.2. NC GS130A-2. Provides definitions for communicable disease, outbreaks, and isolation and quarantine authority.
- 1.3.3. NC GS 130A-41. Defines powers and duties of the Local Health Director, including the authority to investigate communicable diseases and conditions, and exercise quarantine and isolation pursuant to GS 130A-145.
- 1.3.4. NC GS 130A-25(a) states that a violation of public health orders can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor.
- 1.3.5. NC GS 130A-18 defines civil procedures by which the Local Health Director may request that a Superior Court Judge order the person to comply with a public health order.
- 1.3.6. NC GS 15A-401. Covers the powers of law enforcement regarding detention and arrest for violation of communicable disease orders under G.S. 130A-475 or G.S. 130A-145.
- 1.3.7. NC GS 15A-401(b) (4). States that a Law Enforcement Officer who arrests a person for violating an isolation or quarantine order that limits freedom of movement or access may detain the person in an area designated by the State or Local Health Director. If the person is determined to be a threat, they can be denied pre-trial release.
- 1.3.8. For more information on NC General Statutes see <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/gascripts/Statutes/Statutes.asp>

1.4. Legal Authorities for Community Containment and Social Distancing

- 1.4.1. Pandemic control strategies such as social distancing, cancellations, closures, and “snow days” are governed by NC General Statutes (NC GS) pertaining to the powers of the Governor and local elected officials to proclaim a state of emergency or disaster and exercise control while that declaration is in effect.



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1.4.2. Once the Governor, County Executive, or a Municipal Mayor proclaims a state of emergency, they have the authority to regulate movement of people in public areas, the operation of businesses where people can congregate, access to city and county owned properties (by jurisdiction), and other activities or conditions, which may need to be controlled to maintain order, save lives, and protect property.

1.4.3. Public school closures are typically controlled by the Local Board of Education as part of their authority to set the school calendar. (NC GS 115C-84.2.) However, during a declared state of emergency, the Governor can also order closure of schools.

1.4.4. When school properties are publicly owned, by a County or Municipal Government as opposed to the Local Board of Education, they may also fall under statutes governing the powers of counties and municipalities to exercise control in a locally declared state of emergency. In these cases, local elected officials may also be empowered to order school closures.

1.5. NC General Statutes for Community Containment and Social Distancing

1.5.1. Governor

1.5.1.1. NC GS14-288.15. Defines the powers of the Governor to exercise control when a state of emergency exists anywhere in the state. The Governor can intervene when local efforts to control a state of emergency are insufficient, or the emergency is too widespread to assure protections of lives and property.

1.5.1.2. NC GS 14-288.19. Covers the Governor's power to order evacuation of public buildings in a state of emergency.

1.5.1.3. NC GS 166A-6. Outlines statewide authority of the Governor during disasters, as applies to state emergency management laws.

1.5.1.4. NC GS 166A-5. Outlines the powers the Governor shall have for general direction and control of the State Emergency Management



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program during disasters and emergencies. This includes the authority to utilize the services, equipment, supplies and facilities of existing departments, offices and agencies of the State and of the political subdivisions thereof. The officers and personnel of all such departments, offices and agencies are required to cooperate with and extend such services and facilities to the Governor upon request. This authority shall extend to a state of disaster, imminent threat of disaster or emergency management planning and training purposes.

1.5.2. Counties

- 1.5.2.1. NC GS 14-288.13. Outlines the powers of counties to enact ordinances to deal with states of emergency.
- 1.5.2.2. NC GS 153A-123. Covers enforcement of county ordinances for states of emergency.
- 1.5.2.3. NC GS 153A-121. Defines the general ordinance-making power of counties.

1.5.3. Municipalities

- 1.5.3.1. NC GS 14-288.12. Outlines the powers of municipalities to enact ordinances to deal with states of emergency.
- 1.5.3.2. NC GS 160A-175. Covers enforcement of municipal ordinances for states of emergency.
- 1.5.3.3. NC GS 160A-174. Defines the general ordinance-making power of municipalities.

1.5.4. Local Board of Education

- 1.5.4.1. NCGS 115C-84.2. Defines the powers of the Local Boards of Education to set the school calendar.
- 1.5.4.2. NCGS115C-47. Outlines powers and duties (of the Local Board of Education).



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1.6. Powers of the Local Health Director and Local Board of Health for Control of Communicable Disease – General Statutes

1.6.1. GS 130A-144. Outlines the duties and requirements of the Local Health Director regarding disease investigation and surveillance, and the application of control measures for reportable diseases and conditions.

1.6.2. NC GS 130A-39. Defines the powers and duties of a local board of health to protect and promote the public health.

1.6.3. NC GS 130A-476. Gives a healthcare provider, a person in charge of a health care facility, or a unit of state or local government the ability to report to the State Health Director or Local Health Director any events that may indicate the existence of a case or outbreak of an illness, condition, or health hazard that may have been caused by a terrorist incident using nuclear, biological, or chemical agents.

1.6.4. For more information or to view specific North Carolina General Statutes: <http://www.ncleg.net/statutes/statutes.asp>.

1.7. NC Administrative Codes for Control of Communicable Diseases

1.7.1. 10A NCAC 41A.0101. Lists reportable communicable diseases and conditions, and the time frame for reporting. Novel influenza viruses are reportable *immediately* under this code.

1.7.2. 10A NCAC 41A.0102. Outlines the procedures for reporting of communicable diseases and conditions.

1.7.3. 10A NCAC, 41A.0103. Lists duties of the Local Health Director to report communicable diseases.

1.7.4. 10A NCAC 41A.0201. Defines general control measures for communicable diseases. Except as noted in this section of code, it specifies that the recommendations for testing, diagnosis, treatment, follow-up, and prevention of transmission for each disease or condition as outlined in the



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American Public Health Association's (APHA) Control of Communicable Disease Manual shall be the required control measures.

1.7.5. 10ANCAC 41A .0208. Defines control measures for smallpox and Vaccinia disease. States the guidelines and recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for prevention of spread of smallpox and Vaccinia shall supersede those in the Control of Communicable Disease Manual.

1.7.6. For more information on NC Administrative Codes see <http://reports.oah.state.nc.us/ncac.asp>



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Appendix C: Sample Letters and Announcements



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SAMPLE PARENT LETTER #1 ***Prevention Letter***

Use this letter to help prepare parents for Influenza –

Dear Parents,

Public health officials are concerned that influenza (the flu) could easily spread from one person to another. If this should happen, the result could be a global flu pandemic. When a pandemic is present, health officials urge you to take the following actions to protect yourself and others from the flu:

- Keep children at home when they are sick. They should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) except to get medical care.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and discard the tissue after you use it; or, cough and sneeze into the inside of your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.

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



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If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider.

For more information contact:

- New Hanover County Health Department at www.nhcgov.com or call the New Hanover County Health Emergency Information Line at 910-798-6682.
- New Hanover County Schools at www.nhcs.net.
- The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>.
- American Red Cross at www.redcross.org.



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Initial Pandemic Flu Outbreak Letter #2:

Use this letter to let parents know schools are open.

Dear Parents,

This letter is being sent to give you an update about increasing influenza illness in New Hanover County Schools. Every year, some people get sick with the flu during the fall and winter months. This year, there is a new flu virus called _____ that is making many people sick. Health officials call it a “pandemic flu.”

Many students and teachers in our schools have become sick with the flu and classroom absenteeism monitoring is still identifying new cases of the flu among students and school staff. We are hoping that everyone will have a quick recovery; however, we are requiring that no one returns to school until their fever has returned to normal for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

At this time, the New Hanover County Health Department 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.



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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 their hands often 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.
- Avoid other people that 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 your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can get more information by visiting New Hanover County Health Department's website at <http://nhcgov.com/AgnAndDpt/HLTH/Pages/DeptInfo.aspx>, New Hanover County Schools' website at www.nhcs.net or contact the New Hanover County Health Department at 910-798-6682.

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

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



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SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #3 Expanded Outbreak:

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

Dear Parents,

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

Our daily classroom absenteeism monitoring indicates that there are now even more students in our school who are ill with the flu virus. We have been working closely with the New Hanover County Health Department to slow the spread of this virus and they tell us that students who are not ill can continue to attend school. 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, try to keep them at least six feet away from the people who are not sick.
- If some of the people in your home are sick with the flu, some things you can do to help them are:
 - 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 medical condition.



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- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person for easy disposal of tissues.
- 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.

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

For more information contact the New Hanover County Health Department at 910-798-6500 or visit, <http://nhcgov.com/AgnAndDpt/HLTH/Pages/DeptInfo.aspx> or New Hanover County Schools website at www.nhcs.net.



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SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS School closure #4:

Use this letter to inform parents that students are dismissed from school due to an influenza outbreak and ongoing spread in school setting.

Dear Parents,

Dr. Tim Markley, Superintendent for NHCS, and the New Hanover County Board of Education have been in discussion with the New Hanover County Health Department regarding the increasing absenteeism of students and staff in the district due to the influenza outbreak. To disrupt the rate of spread of the influenza virus in the school and community, we have reached a joint decision to dismiss students from schools in _____.

All students are dismissed immediately until further notice. The length of school dismissal is anticipated to last one to two weeks. During this time, both children and adults should stay home as much as possible and be discouraged from congregating with other persons in public places, such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers to stop the spread of flu.

We know that many students may be getting ill during this time and 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 medical condition.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person for quick disposal of used tissues.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.



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- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

For more information, call your healthcare provider, contact the New Hanover County Health Department at 910-798-6500 or visit New Hanover County Health Department's website at www.nhcgov.com/AgnAndDpt/HLTH/Pages/DeptInfo.aspx or New Hanover County Schools' website at www.nhcs.net

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when students will be allowed to return to school.



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SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS Students allowed to return to school #5:

Use this letter to inform parents students are allowed to return to school.

Dear Parents,

New Hanover County health officials in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Public Health have declared the pandemic flu is under control. Students are allowed to return to our school on _____. At this time, students may safely return to class if they have no flu-like symptoms.

Since the flu spreads easily from person-to-person, please keep children who have flu-like symptoms at home. Symptoms include: fever of more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit and cough or sore throat. **Don't send sick children to school—they will be excluded from class and sent home.**

Even though **school is re-opening**, there are still some people who are sick from the flu virus. Health officials say that influenza pandemics sometimes happen in waves. This means more people could become sick again. **If more people become sick, schools may need to close again.** We will continue to give you any important information.

We are looking forward to seeing your children again.



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Appendix D: Tips for Parents on Coping with Pandemic Flu



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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 about leave policies.
- ✓ Check with your school district for home learning activities. Have materials, such as books, on hand.
- ✓ Plan recreational activities that your child can do at home.

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

Examples: Non-perishable foods, Health and emergency supplies

- ✓ Ready to eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, soups
- ✓ Protein or fruit bars
- ✓ Soap and water or alcohol based hand wash
- ✓ Dry cereal or granola
- ✓ Peanut butter and jelly
- ✓ Dried fruits, nuts, trail mix
- ✓ Crackers
- ✓ Canned juices
- ✓ Fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte ®
- ✓ Bottled water
- ✓ Canned or jarred baby food
- ✓ Baby formula
- ✓ Pet food
- ✓ Garbage bags
- ✓ Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers & wipes
- ✓ Manual can opener
- ✓ Portable radio with extra batteries
- ✓ Flashlight with extra batteries
- ✓ Prescribed medical supplies such as
 - Glucose and blood pressure monitoring supplies
 - Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin)

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



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- ✓ 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 fevers only during the period of sponging. Do not sponge with alcohol.
- ✓ Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within their hands frequently.
- ✓ 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, call your healthcare provider or visit New Hanover County Health Department website: <http://www.nhchd.org> or call the Health Emergency Line: 910-798-6682 or visit the federal government's pandemic flu website: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>



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Appendix E: Sample Press Releases

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE A:

The New Hanover County Health Department will use this type of press release to announce that schools will remain open.

For release (DATE) Contact: (PIO name and number)

New Hanover County Schools are to remain open despite the pandemic flu outbreak in the county but parents are asked to prepare for possible student dismissals if the virus continues to spread.

School and county health officials are working together to monitor the situation and parents will be updated with any important information.

“At this time, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open. Our thoughts are with all of our families and children who are affected,” said (health official). If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials say they may need to dismiss students for a period of time. They urged parents to begin planning now for childcare in their home. Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:

- ✓ Teach your child to wash hands frequently 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 elbows. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- ✓ Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick. People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Health officials point out, that recommendations may change during the course of a pandemic flu outbreak. For school updates, parents can call the school district’s hotline at 910-798-6767 of the New Hanover County Health Department’s Health Emergency Information Line at # 910-798-6682.

For more information on pandemic flu, visit New Hanover County Health Department Website at <http://www.nhchd.org> or the federal government website at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>.



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SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE B:

Health Services will use this type of press release to announce student dismissals. A similar press release will be issued when students are allowed to return to school.

For immediate release (DATE) Contact: (PIO name and number)

The New Hanover County Health officials ordered student dismissals from New Hanover County Schools as a result of the pandemic flu outbreak in the county. Students may be dismissed for a period of time – days or even weeks. Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, New Hanover County Health Department has also ordered students and children to be dismissed from colleges, day care centers, and preschools. Because it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather, health officials warn people to stay away from shopping malls, community centers and other places where germs can be spread.

“We know this is an anxious time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with the schools to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information,” said (Local Health Official)

According to LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIAL, the purpose of student dismissals is to limit contact among children to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. Because so many people are sick with the flu, health officials acknowledge that it may be hard to get a doctor’s appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. They provided some tips for residents to care for the sick at home:

- ✓ Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water).
- ✓ Keep the sick 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.
- ✓ Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within their hands frequently.
- ✓ 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.

More information on pandemic flu is available on New Hanover County Health Department’s website at <http://www.nhchd.org> or on the Emergency Information Line # 910-798-6682.



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Appendix F: Sample Key Messages for School Officials

A-OUTBREAK

- ❖ We know this is an anxious time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with local health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information.
- ❖ At this time, under the guidance of the New Hanover County Health Department, we believe students can safely attend classes. Our thoughts are with all of our families and children who are affected.
- ❖ If pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials may need to dismiss students from schools for an extended period of time (for example, up to 6 weeks).
- ❖ The purpose of student dismissals will be to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. If students are dismissed, children should stay at home.
- ❖ We urge parents to plan now for the possibility of student dismissals. Arrange day care, and contact your school district for more information on learning activities.
- ❖ Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:
 - Teach your children to wash hands frequently 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.
 - Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- ❖ Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. We will make public announcements through the media and parents can call the school district's hotline.
- ❖ For more information on pandemic flu and prevention, visit New Hanover County Health Department's website at <http://www.nhchd.org> or call the Information Line at 910-798-6682.



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B-STUDENT DISMISSALS

- ❖ New Hanover County Health Officials have ordered the dismissal of students from schools as a result of the pandemic flu outbreak in our county.
- ❖ Students may be dismissed for an extended period of time (for example, up to 6 weeks).
- ❖ We know this is a difficult time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information.
- ❖ Because pandemic flu is easily spread from person-to-person, it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather and children should stay home. The purpose of student dismissals is to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.
- ❖ During this time, children and adults should stay away from other people and groups, as much as possible. Health officials also advise people should not gather in other locations such as homes, shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.
- ❖ Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:
 - Teach your children to wash hands frequently 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.
 - Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- ❖ Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. We will make public announcements through the media and parents can call the school district's hotline.
- ❖ For more information on pandemic flu and prevention, visit New Hanover County Health Department's website at <http://www.nhchd.org> or call the Information Line at 910-798-6682.



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Appendix G: Daily Pandemic Flu Census Report



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Daily Pandemic Flu Census Report

Once pandemic flu* has been confirmed as present in New Hanover County by the Public Health Division's Communicable Disease Programs use this form to report daily to New Hanover County Health Department about the number of students absent with flu-like illness. (Matches the definition: fever of 101.5° degrees Fahrenheit and one of the following: cough, sore throat, headache, muscle ache)

Name of School _____ Today's Date _____
Elementary ____ Middle ____ High School ____
City _____ School District _____
Reporting Individual _____ Phone (____) _____ - _____

Students:

Number of students absent with flu-like illness today _____
Total number of students enrolled in your school _____
ADA for the day _____

Staff/Faculty:

Number of staff/faculty absent with flu-like illness today _____
Total number of staff/faculty employed in your school _____

Assistance Needed/Comments:

Fax this form daily during the period of Intensive Surveillance to _____.

If you have any questions regarding this form or disease reporting please call the New Hanover County Health Director.

*The Local Health Officer will issue orders and surveillance instructions based on the severity of the pandemic (See the CDC Pandemic Severity Index)

06/08



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Appendix H: School Closing Emergency Plans



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School Closing Emergency Plans

Due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, it may be necessary to close schools for the entire day, to open schools late, or to close early. The procedures used in school closings are detailed below. Keep this information in a convenient location for future reference.

Parents are urged to make arrangements now for the care of their children when schedule changes are made (and to provide for the rare situation when it is necessary to close an individual school because of a power failure or other circumstances). Children should know where to go if a parent will not be home.

Decisions on schedule changes are made after careful study of the best information available from many sources including weather services, the highway department, the police, and NHCS transportation staff members who are out checking the roads. While no sources dealing with weather predictions can be infallible, decisions are made with one overriding consideration—the safety of the students who ride buses or walk to school each day.

NHCS has several schedules set up to deal with inclement weather; these are put into effect when conditions threaten the safety of children who are walking or riding school buses to schools. These schedules are:

(1) Keep schools closed. (2) Open two hours late. (3) Two-hour early release.

In every case of a schedule change AlertNow will be activated. The news will also be carried by radio and television stations, which are notified as soon as a decision is made. When the decision is made that schools will be closed all day or will open two hours late, the 11 p.m. announcement will be made whenever possible. The school system will try to make a scheduling decision the night before so that parents, staff members, and students know what will happen the following day. However, there may be occasions when the decision cannot be made very early in the morning. This usually happens when precipitation is already on the ground and the temperatures are such that the precipitation on the ground is frozen or will refreeze.



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When schools are closed for the day, the following will apply:

- Extracurricular activities, interscholastic contests, team practices, field trips, and recreation programs in schools and on school grounds are usually canceled. However, check with your coach or school to confirm.

When schools are opened two hours late, the following will apply:

- Schools will close at their usual Monday-Friday time.
- Offices will open on time.
- Morning field trips are canceled.

When schools are closed two hours early due to worsening weather conditions during the day, the following will apply:

- The announcement will be made by 10:30 a.m. whenever possible.
- Elementary schools will close one hour earlier than the middle and high schools. Elementary schools will close at 12:00 noon and middle and high schools will close at 1:00 p.m.
- In most cases, extracurricular activities, interscholastic contests, team practices, field trips and recreation programs in schools and on school grounds are canceled. However, check with your school to confirm.

NHCS does not make an announcement when schools are open or when sports and other after-school events are being held according to schedule.



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Appendix I: NHCS EOC Incident Command Center Org Chart

