

# Pandemic Preparedness Plan

## San Angelo Independent School District

### **PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this plan is to provide procedures for mitigating the consequences of a pandemic affecting San Angelo ISD and Tom Green County.

Influenza is a highly contagious viral disease. Pandemics occur because of the virus' ability to change into new strains or types. People may be immune to some strains; however, depending on how much the virus has changed, people may have little or no immunity to the new strains. Small changes can result in localized epidemics. If a novel and highly contagious strain of the influenza virus emerges, an influenza pandemic can occur and affect populations around the world.

The outbreak of infectious diseases around the world has aroused and generated concern about the possible significant impact on our health, livelihood, economy, and education system as well as that of the world. No one knows when or how severe a pandemic outbreak might be. In this way, planning for a pandemic is like planning for a tornado or fire. First, in a pandemic, there will be some warning, which could range from weeks to five to six months while there is no warning for tornados. Second, a pandemic could last anywhere from months to a year or more, while a tornado is short lived. Third, in a pandemic, there would be little or no outside help; those not affected would be reluctant due to disease exposure, at least in the initial stages before the development of the pandemic worldwide. In contrast to a tornado, which would bring people in from neighboring cities, counties, and states to assist in the tornado response.

Influenza symptoms are familiar to most persons in the United States - fever, headache, sore throat, cough, muscle aches and fatigue - usually lasting between two to seven days. In the absence of laboratory testing, the disease is often indistinguishable from other respiratory diseases. Three virus types: influenza A, B, and C, can cause respiratory illness and are easily transmitted in crowded and enclosed spaces. Regional and widespread epidemics are most often caused by influenza A and B viruses, while type C is associated with mild illness, sporadic cases, or minor outbreaks. Difficulty in controlling illness from one flu season to the next is due to changes in virus types A and B. Both undergo constant, but relatively subtle mutations, accounting for the different influenza epidemiology, strains, and vaccines seen from year to year. Pandemics occur when an entirely new subtype of influenza A virus emerges (antigenic shift) through recombination of human and animal antigens (swine or avian).

The flu is too often associated with a serious winter cold, a vaccination shot, or an illness that is life threatening only to young children and the elderly. However, pandemic history has shown that during the “Spanish Flu”, the highest mortality rates were among young adults.

The important thing is that schools and departments take steps now to protect staff and students from a possible influenza outbreak of any kind. Education and outreach are critical to preparing for a pandemic. Understanding what a pandemic is, what needs to be done at all levels to prepare for pandemic influenza, and what could happen during a pandemic helps us make informed decisions both as individuals and a school district.

This action plan includes guidelines and provides steps our schools and various departments should take when specific triggers and events occur. Research regarding ongoing events worldwide and nationally may cause alteration of the plan to meet the district needs.

## PREVENTION/MITIGATION

Prevention is always better than cure. While we hope for new breakthroughs in the medical diagnosis and treatment of disease, educators must be actively involved in teaching our next generation how to cope with the changes of emerging diseases. Both staff and students have a responsibility in the prevention of transmission of communicable diseases, which are diseases.

The following general preventative measures should be communicated, adhered to, and reviewed frequently by both students and staff:

- **Vaccinations** – Vaccinations against influenza each fall remains the primary way to prevent this disease. The Health Services Coordinator will work with local hospitals to get vaccination clinics set up at various campuses for employee convenience. School nurses will continue to communicate and recommend vaccinations to parents, students, and staff.
- **Hand Washing** – Hand washing is the best defense against the spread of diseases. Clean hands with soap and water when visibly soiled, before preparing or eating food or beverages, after coughing or sneezing, and after using the bathroom facilities. Facilities and supplies should be readily available for both students and staff. If soap and water are not available, hand sanitizers are acceptable, but hand washing needs to occur as soon as possible.
- **Respiratory Hygiene** – When a person coughs or sneezes, propelled droplets in the surrounding air can spread various infections. Droplets in the air can be inhaled, possibly infecting another person. The use of a tissue to cover when you sneeze or cough can break the cycle. Dispose of the tissue in the wastebasket, and hands should be washed with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Tissues should be available in all classrooms, common areas, and cafeterias or rooms where meals are provided.
- **Good Housekeeping** – Normal cleaning and maintenance of facilities should be maintained with high standards. Increased disinfecting may be required in some circumstances.
- **Universal Precautions** – This is the practice of treating all body fluids as if they contained blood and are considered infectious. Therefore, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE—most commonly gloves) should be used when handling or cleaning up blood and/or body fluids. All district personnel are trained in Blood borne Pathogens and the use of PPE's.
- **Separation and Grouping** – This is the practice of keeping the ill separated from the healthy. Ideally, this is accomplished in separate physical spaces; however, if this cannot be done, then separate by placing as much physical distance between the groups as possible within the common space. The basic concept would also include staying home when ill---students and staff alike. Each campus principal and school nurse should identify locations for isolation.
- San Angelo ISD will work closely with the Tom Green County Health Department to determine the need for activation of our Plan. The following procedures will be

followed by school nurses/campus personnel for reporting communicable disease, including influenza, to the Health Department:

- Report suspected and confirmed cases of influenza to the Tom Green County Health Department at 657-4214.
- The Tom Green County Health Department will monitor countywide cases on influenza and inform school districts as to appropriate actions.
- The District-wide Emergency Operations Team will review and assess any obstacles to implementation of the Plan.
- The school district will emphasize hand washing and cough/sneezing etiquette through education in the classrooms.
- The school district will educate and provide information to parents, staff, and students about our Pandemic Plan and about how to make an informed decision to stay home when ill. We will utilize our website, postings, Channel 4, and direct mailings for this purpose.

## **PREPAREDNESS**

Parental participation is key to an effective prevention and control program. Parental education should take place through PTA/PTO meetings, fact sheets, and newsletters. Explanations of home quarantine and isolation should be discussed with parents. Parents need to be aware of their child's immunization status for vaccine preventable disease and keep abreast of their child's day-to-day health. If their child is sick, they should not be sent to school and, parents should seek medical attention for the child from their health care provider.

Parents should understand their responsibility to notify the school immediately if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease. The school will then notify the Tom Green County Health Department and begin to gather information if requested. (Attached: Influenza Case Definition, Daily, and Weekly Flu Census)

- Educational efforts will target common means of transmission such as:
  - Sharing common towels
  - Sharing food, beverages, or utensils
  - Failure to wash hands prior to fixing food and/or beverages and after using the toilet
  - Failure to cover a cough or sneeze and to wash hands afterwards
  - Infrequent cleaning and disinfecting of common use items or equipment
  
- Strategies for communicating influenza education will include:
  - Use of student/teacher class time
  - Signage throughout school, educating about good hygiene
  - Websites
  - Employee training
  - Translation of information to non-English speaking families

The Emergency Operations Team will continually update this plan of action for the pandemic flu as needed.

In the event of a pandemic flu crisis, the Emergency Operations Team, under the direction of the superintendent, will coordinate response and recovery efforts with recommendations from the recognized Health authorities as follow:

- Tom Green County Health Department
- Texas Department of State Health Services
- Federal Centers for Disease Control

As part of the district's Emergency Operations Plan, pandemic influenza preparedness involves stakeholders from local public health and emergency response agencies, district administrators, school health, counselors, teachers, food and child nutrition services, and parent representatives.

Communication will be important throughout a pandemic outbreak. It will be necessary to communicate with parents, students, staff, and the school community. Communication methods may include school postings on the website, general mailings, e-mails, special presentations, phones and cell phones, Channel 4, and the public media. The school district Public Information Officer has been designated to coordinate this effort and act as the central point for all communication. The PIO will also retain responsibility for establishing and maintaining contact with accepted media partners. The PIO will work closely with our Technology Director to assure proper function of all communication systems. This coordination will also help assure that as many redundant communication systems as possible are available.

Continuity of operations and business office function could be severely impacted by a loss of staff. As such, our plan will include procedures for maintaining essential functions and services. This will include:

- Overall operations -- We have defined the following decision making authority for the District:
  1. Superintendent
  2. Assistant Superintendent---Administrative Services
  3. Assistant Superintendent—Business and Support Services
  4. Assistant Superintendent—HR and Professional Development
  5. Assistant Superintendent—Curriculum and Instruction
  6. Executive Director---Athletics
  7. Executive Director---Schools
  8. Executive Director---HR

The campus principal will determine the decision-making authority for their assigned campus.

- The Business Office is essential for maintaining overall function and facilities operation. Back-up personnel will be important to maintain purchasing and payroll responsibilities. These essential functions will need to be maintained at the campus level as well.

- Maintenance of facilities will be difficult with a reduced or absent maintenance staff. The Director of Maintenance or back-up designee will keep the business office informed of such status and of the point at which buildings can no longer be maintained. If necessary, we will pool maintenance staff to form a mobile central team to help assist in essential building function and cleaning of critical areas such as bathrooms. Teachers may be asked to assist in this effort. The Maintenance Department may provide sanitizers for each classroom teacher for doorknob and desktop disinfection only as needed. Desktops will be misted with the provided disinfectant and left to dry.
- Human Resources will be essential in monitoring absenteeism and assuring appropriate delegation of authority. Changes to district policies and procedures that reflect crisis response may become necessary and will be implemented by Human Resources.
- Continuity of instruction will need to be considered in the event of significant absences or school closure. Restructuring of the school calendar may become necessary. We will work closely with the Texas Education Agency on this potential result throughout the crisis period. Some of the alternate learning strategies we may possibly implement to be used in combination as necessary include:
  1. Hard copy, self-directed lessons
  2. Use of mobile media storage devices for lessons (CD's, jump drives, IPODS)
  3. On-line instruction, on-line resources, on-line textbooks
  4. Communication modalities for assignment postings and follow-up: telephone, Postal Service, cell phone, cell phone mail, text messages, e-mail, automated notification systems, and website postings.

## RESPONSE

### IMMEDIATE ACTION:

- Report flu-like symptoms to school nurse
  - Isolate infected individual until removed from school
  - Call parent/guardian
  - Verify diagnosis with student's physician or Tom Green County Health Department
  - Utilize effective infection control procedures through custodial department
  - Follow recommendations of Tom Green County Health Department and/or Health Services Coordinator
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- The District-wide Emergency Operations team will meet to determine the need for activation of a pandemic response based on internal monitoring and correspondence with the Tom Green County Health Department and other experts. Each campus-level Safety Team will be informed that the Plan has been activated.
  - The Public Information Officer will work closely with the Technology Director to re-test all communication systems to assure proper function. The District-wide Emergency Operations Team and campus-level Safety Teams will assist in this effort.
  - Based on the latest information from collaboration with our partners, and to send a message consistent with public health authorities, the PIO will utilize the communication methods previously described to alert the school community of the activation of our Emergency Operations Plan as it specifically applies to pandemics.
  - The Business Department will meet with staff to review essential functions and responsibilities of back-up personnel. Ability to utilize off-site systems will be tested. The Business Department will monitor utilization of supplies, equipment, contracts, and provided services and adjust as necessary.
  - The Maintenance Director or designee will review essential building function procedures with the Principal and chain of command. Sanitizing procedures will be reviewed with teachers.
  - The Human Resources department will meet with staff to review essential functions and responsibilities of back-up personnel. The Human Resources Department will monitor absenteeism for the possible need to amend existing procedures.
  - Based on recommendations from Local and State Authorities, schools may be closed. Our plan for continuity of instruction will be implemented as previously described.

Please see the Pandemic Response Matrix, Definition of Surveillance Levels, and Flow chart attached.



## **RECOVERY**

### **“Second Wave”**

Typically in a pandemic, the number of new cases of influenza peaks and then declines, giving the impression that the pandemic is over. Then within a few months, influenza incidence once again increases. School officials and local health providers/officials need to remain vigilant for a return of the epidemic activity. This is especially difficult given that all personnel and supplies involved in responding to the epidemic will be exhausted by efforts to respond to the pandemic. The perceived “end of the pandemic” may be viewed as an opportunity to relax and recover. However, surveillance should be maintained, even though a decline in numbers may be seen.

### **Recovery**

- Verify Pandemic Control Level with Tom Green County Health Department and/or Health Services Coordinator
- Notify parents/guardians regarding school’s return to normal operations
- Provide counseling services as needed for students/staff that lost family members during Pandemic

## **RESOURCES**

U.S. Department of Education

[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

Flu Information and Resources

[www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/flu-recources.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/flu-recources.html)

World Health Organization

[www.who.int/csr/disease/avianinfluenza/updates/en](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avianinfluenza/updates/en)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Influenza

[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)

U. S. Department of State Bureau of Administration, Pandemic Response Matrix

[www.state.gov/m/a/os/cl17204.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/cl17204.htm)

School District Pandemic Influenza checklist

[www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/schoolchecklist.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/schoolchecklist.html)

Contra Costa Health Services

[www.cchealth.org/topics/pandemic\\_flu/plan/](http://www.cchealth.org/topics/pandemic_flu/plan/)

Lake Dallas ISD

Tom Green County Health Department