

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Background

The Division, in cooperation with the provincial government and Alberta Health Services, supports efforts to minimize a pandemic and its disruption to the operational activities of the Division. The Superintendent or designate is expected to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources for the maximum benefit and protection of students, staff and facilities.

Procedures

1. In the event that Alberta Health Services identifies evidence of a significant influenza outbreak in the region, the Superintendent or designate has the authority to make final decisions regarding crisis response, as guided by the Emergency Response Manual. When a state of emergency is declared by a Ministry of the Alberta Government, the particular ministry will have such authority.
2. The Superintendent or designate will communicate a standard set of response protocols for dealing with a pandemic to ensure that members of administration and staffs are familiar with roles and processes in the event of an outbreak.
3. In accordance with directives emanating from federal and provincial authorities and the consequent circumstances that may prevail, the Superintendent or designate may temporarily suspend the Division's current practices and operating guidelines. Such action shall be reported to the Board as soon as practicable, along with a recommendation should a change in procedures be warranted.
4. Strategic Action

ECSRD Strategic action	Goal
Level 1 Reduce human exposure to virus	Reduce opportunities for human infection and, in doing so, reduce opportunities for a pandemic virus to spread. Schools will review preventative protocols: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover your cough by coughing into your elbow or sleeve or use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Discard the tissue. • Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Hand sanitizers are also effective. • Reduce the spread of germs by limiting the touching of eyes, nose or mouth and by washing your hands frequently. Schools display and distribute posters and pamphlets that promote good hygiene and influenza self care, etc.
Level 2 Strengthen the early warning system	Ensure that schools and the community have all the information needed for awareness and accurate risk assessment. District posts updates/warnings/alerts/resources from AB ED, AB

	<p>Health or WHO. Schools inform parents of updates/warnings/alerts/resources through letters or newsletters. Attendance on school sites is monitored.</p>
<p>Level 3 Intensify containment</p>	<p>There exists evidence of increased human exposure and transmission (where it has been confirmed). Direct exposure refers to significant interaction with an affected person. Absentee rate exceeds 10% which requires direct involvement with Alberta Health Services, Public Health to further investigate and implement measures to limit transmission of illness. As recommended by Public Health, the schools will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and remind students and staff of basic infection control practices such as respiratory etiquette, and frequent hand cleaning. • Notify parents if students become ill while at school. Ill students are kept separated from others until picked up by parents. • Advise ill students/staff to stay home. • Carry out frequent environmental cleaning especially in high touch areas. • Monitor student and staff absentee rates due to illness. • Distribute a letter from the Superintendent informing parents of increased absenteeism due to influenza-like illness) ILI and district protocol. <p>If a child exhibits flu-like symptoms including fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue, lack of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting and muscle aches, they will be sent home from school for at least seven days after symptoms start or until 24 hours after they resolve, whichever is longer. This is the time when the illness can spread to others. Staff exhibiting ILI symptoms will be sent home. Sites will be expected to establish isolation rooms to contain the virus. In consultation with site based administrators, travel of individuals experiencing flu symptoms or directly exposed to the H1N1 flu, will be suspended in an attempt to contain the virus. Daily monitoring of attendance.</p> <p><i>In the event site absenteeism exceeds 10% the following protocol will be in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Superintendent who will advise AB ED of percentage absenteeism at specific schools. • The Principal will be directed to contact Public Health in their area and report absenteeism and take direction from Public Health. Alberta Health website has the numbers of community Public Health contacts: www.albertahealthservices.ca/facilities.asp

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school principal may be directed by Public Health to identify and provide contact numbers for 4-6 students who have severe flu. Public Health will then contact the parents to arrange for specimen samples (swabs). • A letter will go to all parents in the school community from the Superintendent.
<p>Level 4 Build capacity to cope with pandemic</p>	<p>Localized outbreaks of the flu are confirmed. Absenteeism is noticeable (25%-50%). Daily monitoring of attendance. Schools have formulated and tested pandemic response plans to ensure that sites are able to operate during a pandemic with significant reduction in staff. At 25% absenteeism, schools will be asked to postpone any unnecessary travel (ie. field trips, meetings) to prevent further transmission of the virus. When absenteeism exceeds 50% for two consecutive days, in consultation with Public Health and Alberta Education, the Board may suspend all school-wide travel (include school trips, off site meetings, sporting activities, extracurricular events). Absent students will have access to learning resources through teacher, print, outreach, online sources.</p>
<p>Level 5 District sites non operational</p>	<p>Flu is widespread. Absenteeism, in particular among staff, is too great to ensure safe and effective school operation. In consultation with Alberta Health, Alberta Education, and the Board of Trustees, schools may be closed. Students will access learning resources through print, outreach, online, web-based sources.</p>

Under the leadership of Alberta Health and Wellness, the Alberta Health Services Schools Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee has been struck for the purpose of providing provincial oversight and guidance to school authorities during the pandemic. The specific role of the committee is to co-ordinate roles and responsibilities and to identify risks and mitigation strategies for schools during the H1N1 pandemic event. This committee is comprised of representatives from Education, Health and Wellness, Alberta Health Services, the Alberta School Boards Association and the College of Alberta School Superintendents. Education will post advice, recommendations and provincial guidelines arising from this committee on its website at www.education.alberta.ca/admin/healthandsafety/h1n1.aspx. School authorities are encouraged to visit the website regularly in order to access the latest pandemic information and messages. Local decisions regarding issues such as field trips, programming and consideration of facility closures will be made in consultation with local health officials. ECSR will communicate closely with our respective Education Field Services Manager about how the pandemic influenza is impacting our school authority.

Reference: Section 33, 52, 53, 196, 197, 222 Education Act
 Emergency Medical Aid Act
 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 Health Information Act
 Occupational Health and Safety Act
 Public Health Act
 Communicable Disease Regulation (AR 238/85)