

Pandemic Influenza Response Plans

This IPRO report examines the roles of government, institutions, and individuals in responding to a pandemic influenza outbreak. The report also summarizes the key components of state-level pandemic influenza response plans.

National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza

In 2005, The Homeland Security Council developed the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza,¹ a set of guidelines to be implemented in the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak in the United States. The document outlines the responsibilities of governments, institutions, and individuals during an outbreak. These responsibilities are listed below, as they appear in the Homeland Security Council's document.

Federal Government

- Advance international preparedness, surveillance, response, and containment activities
- Support the development and distribution of vaccine stockpiles
- Ensure that federal departments and agencies have developed preparedness and response plans
- Facilitate state and local planning
- Provide guidance to the private sector and the public on preparedness and response

States and Localities

- Limit the spread of an outbreak
- Establish preparedness and response plans
- Integrate non-health entities (e.g. law enforcement and city services) in pandemic planning
- Establish state- and community-based vaccine stockpiles and distribution systems
- Identify and educate key spokespersons for the community
- Provide public education campaigns on pandemic influenza

Private Sector and Critical Infrastructure Institutions

- Maintain an ethic of infection control
- Establish contingency systems to maintain delivery of essential goods and services during a period of significant worker absenteeism
- Develop mechanisms for workers to provide services from home if non-essential travel outside the home is discouraged
- Establish partnerships with other private sector members to provide mutual support and maintenance of services during an outbreak

Individuals and Families

- Take precautions to prevent the spread of infection to others
- Be prepared to follow public health guidance

¹ United States. Homeland Security Council. National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza. Washington, GPO:2005

- Keep supplies at home to support the essential needs of the household for several days

State Pandemic Influenza Response Plans

The federal Department of Health and Human Services maintains a website with links to state pandemic influenza response plans.² Using the links available on this website and searching state departments of public health, IPRO researchers found that forty six states and the District of Columbia have the full text of their plans available online. Three of these plans, those of Louisiana, Maine, and Utah are still in the draft stage.

The remaining four states, Colorado, Iowa,³ North Dakota, and Pennsylvania, have only a summary of their plans available online. The content of the summaries suggest that the plans are similar to those of other states. Tom Newton, the director of the Iowa Department of Public Health, told IPRO researchers in an email on September 18, 2009 that the full Iowa pandemic influenza response plan is confidential. The North Dakota Public Health Preparedness Division Director also confirmed that North Dakota's pandemic influenza response plan is confidential.

IPRO researchers reviewed the comprehensive plans available on the Health and Human Services website and found that most states' pandemic influenza plans contain the following elements:

- *Introduction:* A broad overview of pandemic influenza outbreaks, including history, general information, and global statistics
- *Statement of Purpose:* An outline of the goals of the plan, which usually include strengthening the state's response capacity in the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak in order to protect citizens, prevent the spread of the disease, and maintain state agencies, infrastructure, and key resources
- *Statement of Assumptions:* A list of general assumptions about how a state should deal with an emergency situation, how threats to public health should be controlled, and how pandemic influenza operates and should be treated
- *Impact of Pandemic Influenza in the State:* A prediction of deaths, hospitalizations, and outpatient hospital visits
- *Description of Federal and State Roles:* An explanation of the roles of the federal Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services and the president's power to declare a federal emergency and activate the Federal Response Plan, as well as a description of state Departments of Public Health and Health and Human Services responses

² Flu.gov. 14 Sept. 2009. US Department of Health and Human Services. Accessed Sept. 2009 <<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>>.

³ Iowa. Dept. of Public Health. Pandemic Influenza Annex Executive Summary. Des Moines: IA Dept. of Public Health, 2006.

- *Phases of an Influenza Pandemic:* An outline of the World Health Organization's (WHO) six pandemic alert phases and an explanation of the state's own pandemic phases (if different than the WHO's)
- *Surveillance and Investigation:* A description of methods used to track and rapidly identify and isolate persons infected with an influenza virus, including expanding the number of existing surveillance sites, improving school absenteeism reporting, and obtaining the appropriate clinical specimens for laboratory culture
- *Healthcare Systems:* A description of the general response by hospitals and clinics to a pandemic influenza outbreak, including educating healthcare providers on the diagnosis and management of pandemic influenza and on appropriate infection control strategies
- *Community and State Disease Control Strategies:* An outline of strategies that help prevent or delay transmission of the virus in communities, non-healthcare institutions, and households, including educating the community about social distancing, disseminating travel advisories, screening persons arriving from affected areas, closing schools, restricting public gatherings, using alternate care sites and quarantining exposed persons
- *Vaccines and Anti-Virals:* A description of how vaccines and anti-viral drugs will be distributed to those at risk for infection (including establishing priority groups for vaccination) or to those who have already become infected to assure optimal use of the vaccine and drug stockpiles
- *Communications:* A plan for how healthcare providers, local government and community leaders, and the media will collaborate to provide information to the public
- *Notification Protocol:* An outline of how the identification of a case of influenza will reach the appropriate authorities who can verify and report the case
- *Plan Maintenance or Emergency Response:* Mechanisms for changing the plan as the pandemic unfolds and evolves
- *Support of State Agencies, Critical Infrastructure, and Key Assets:* A description of actions that will be taken to ensure the continued functionality of state agencies, infrastructure, and assets, including shifting resources and responsibilities to other agencies, temporary suspensions of agencies and infrastructure, and workforce support mechanisms
- *Appendices:* A compilation of other useful information, including abbreviations and acronyms, definitions, tables and graphs, laboratory capacity considerations, guidelines for recognizing influenza, psychological considerations, travel-related risk, and community- and state-level operational response checklists