

SECTION:	APPENDIX I	POLICY #	n/a
POLICY NAME	PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLAN	# of PAGES	13

EXPOSURE CONTROL PLAN

The Garth Homer Society Pandemic Influenza Plan has several purposes:

1. Provide background information on pandemic influenza.
2. Outline the Society's roles and responsibilities during an influenza pandemic.
3. Outline the steps to be taken by the Society in managing an influenza pandemic.
4. Detail the infection control measures to be undertaken by the Society.
5. Detail the necessary training to help prevent the spread of infection.

This plan was originally developed in response to the Pandemic Influenza predicted to occur in the winter of 2009/2010. This plan serves as a template and will be reviewed and implemented by GHS Management as soon as there is an indication of a likely pandemic influenza outbreak.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What Is Influenza?

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a highly contagious and common respiratory illness caused by a virus. There are three known types of influenza virus – A, B, and C. Types A and B cause seasonal influenza. Only type A is associated with pandemics.

What Is An Influenza Pandemic?

An influenza pandemic occurs when there is an abrupt and major change in the structure of the influenza type A virus. This change may occur in two ways:

1. When two different influenza viruses infect the same cell their genetic material mixes resulting in a completely new strain of virus.
2. A virus may undergo random mutation. This type of change may occur during the sequential infection of humans and other mammals and lead to a virus more efficiently transmitted between humans.

Since people have little or no immunity to a completely new strain of influenza A virus, it can spread very quickly. When outbreaks occur in one or more countries or worldwide, the event is called a pandemic.

How Is Influenza Transmitted?

Influenza is usually transmitted from person to person by droplet spread or direct contact.

➤ Droplet Spread

This refers to spray with relatively large, short range droplets produced by sneezing, coughing, talking or singing. These droplets may spray up to one metre and can land directly in the eye or be breathed in through the nose or mouth.

➤ Direct Contact

This occurs when there is immediate transfer of the virus through skin to skin contact or kissing. For example, an infected person may cough into his/her hands and then shake hands with another person, thus spreading the virus.

How Long Can Flu Germs Live Outside the Body?

The length of time that a cold and flu germs can survive outside the body on an environmental surface, such as a doorknob, varies greatly. But the suspected range is from a few seconds to 48 hours — depending on the specific virus and the type of surface. Flu viruses tend to live longer on surfaces than cold viruses do. Also, it's generally believed that cold and flu viruses live longer on nonporous surfaces — such as plastic, metal or wood — than they do on porous surfaces — such as fabrics, skin or paper.

Although cold and flu viruses primarily spread from person-to-person contact, you can also become infected from contact with contaminated surfaces.

Incubation Period

The incubation period (the time between being exposed to the virus and the point at which one starts to experience symptoms) is one to three days. Most people recover in seven to ten days. Most adults are infectious to others between twenty-four hours before and up to five days after they develop symptoms.

Influenza Symptoms

The first symptoms are usually fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, physical exhaustion and a dry cough. Later, the infected person may have a sore throat, a stuffy or runny nose, and a worsening cough. In the case of the H1N1 influenza virus, some people have also reported vomiting and diarrhoea.

How Severe Is Illness Associated With a Pandemic Influenza Virus?

Illnesses range from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection have occurred.

Who Is Considered At “High Risk” For Serious Complications?

Certain people are at higher risk of serious complications. Within the general population this includes people 65 years and older, people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women and children less than two years of age. For these people, the flu may lead to complications such as pneumonia which can be fatal.

About seventy percent of people who have been hospitalized with H1N1 had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing the individual in the high risk category. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

GHS’s ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES DURING AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

GHS Management Team

Ensure training is provided to employees regarding emergency responses and service continuity plans so that they know their roles and responsibilities. Staff should also be trained in infection control precautions.

1. Ensure proper precautions and procedures are in place to minimize risk of exposure to clients and employees.
2. Develop a system to monitor, track and report all influenza pandemic related absences. Analyze absence rates.
3. Develop a continuity plan by identifying critical functions and determining minimum staffing to maintain operations.
4. Facilitate a process for identifying employees/clients most at risk to complications resulting from exposure
5. Regular review of impacts of influenza on status of health and safety of clients and employees Check in with health authorities to keep abreast of spread of pandemic influenza as closure will be mandated by local health authorities. Monitor availability of staff to meet client needs.

Team Coordinators

1. Assist in identifying clients most at risk for serious complications resulting from influenza pandemic.

2. Inform the management team on a weekly or more frequently, if necessary, basis of influenza related illnesses of clients.

Employees

1. Follow necessary precautions to avoid transmitting infection.
2. Inform designated contacts if they are off work because they are experiencing influenza type symptoms.
3. Inform the team coordinator if a client is presenting any influenza type symptoms and/or if they have called in sick.
4. On becoming infected with the influenza virus to remain at home for five to seven days or until the symptoms resolve completely, whichever comes first.

PROCEDURE – STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY THE GHS TO MANAGE INFLUENZA OUTBREAK

Identify GHS Employees Most At Risk for Exposure

All employees providing direct service to clients including those in the CRC are at the greatest risk for exposure.

Identify Employees Most at Risk of Serious Complications as a Result of Influenza Pandemic

The employees most at risk of serious complications as a result of an influenza pandemic are as follows:

- Pregnant women.
- Employees over the age of 65.
- Employees with chronic medical conditions including diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

Employees who are at most risk of serious complications and who believe that coming to work may compromise their health, must obtain from their physician a written verification that (a) they are in a high risk group and (b) that coming to work could compromise their health. Upon providing this verification from the doctor, the employee has the right to take sick time.

Identification of and Responses to Clients Most at Risk of Serious Complications as a Result of Influenza Pandemic

Clients most at risk for serious complications from influenza pandemic are identified by team coordinators. These include clients with the characteristics listed above along with those:

- Who have a history of chronic illness

- Whose respiratory system may be compromised due to dysphagia, cerebral palsy or other conditions.
- showing signs of premature aging.

GHS management may make the decision to require these clients to stay at home - even though they may not show symptoms of influenza – especially if the client has had regular contact with other GHS clients who have been sick with pandemic influenza.

Clients Infected with Influenza During a Pandemic

GHS will require that clients showing symptoms of influenza remain at home for the duration of their sickness. They are to remain at home for five to seven days or until the symptoms resolve completely, whichever comes first.

The GHS reserves the right to require a completed health verification form for clients prior to their return to programming following their illness.

In the event that the healthcare system declares a local emergency for an influenza pandemic and the healthcare system is overwhelmed with people seeking necessary medical attention, the GHS may waive its requirement for a health verification form.

Clients Showing Influenza Symptoms While at the GHS

Clients that are showing symptoms of influenza while attending GHS programs will be identified immediately by the key worker to the team coordinator. The team coordinator will work in cooperation with the Director of Client Services to ensure that the individual is returned to their residence as soon as possible.

As there will be a period of time before the client can be picked up GHS will isolate the individual as soon as possible. To coordinate the isolation of a client, the key worker works with the team coordinator and the Director, Client Services.

The first aid room will be used to provide isolation. Support needs for the client will be arranged by the Director, Client Services. Any employee providing support to the client will need to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g. N95 respiratory mask and gloves).

Employees Experiencing Influenza

GHS requires that any employee experiencing symptoms of influenza remain at home for the duration of their sickness. They are to remain at home for five to seven days or until the symptoms resolve completely, whichever comes first.

The GHS reserves the right to require a completed 'Medical Report Request' form for employees prior to returning to work following their illness. In the event that the healthcare system declares a local emergency for an influenza pandemic and the

healthcare system is overwhelmed with people seeking necessary medical attention, the GHS may waive its requirement for a 'Medical Report Request' form.

The GHS will be tracking the incidence of reported cases of the influenza pandemic. Therefore it is required that employees disclose when they are off work due to flu like symptoms.

Any employee who is off due to pandemic influenza is entitled to the same sick leave benefits as are applied to any absence due to illness. (Refer to Article 19 in the collective agreement.)

If an employee who is infected with influenza has reason to believe that they become infected at work, they may choose to file a Worksafe BC report.

In the case where an employee/employer conflict occurs regarding the health of an employee infected with influenza, the GHS will require a completed 'Medical Report Request' form.

Employee Privacy Rights and Their Medical Status

GHS has the right to ask employees questions in an attempt to determine if an employee may be contagious with influenza. Where an employee has fallen ill with influenza, GHS may inform other employees that they may have been exposed to an illness. If possible, management will advise that there might have been an exposure in the workplace, without disclosing who had the influenza.

Employees Caring for Family Members Who Are Ill

Unionized employees – Article 20.2 (Special Leave) of the collective agreement provides that a regular employee who has completed probation shall be entitled to special leave without pay to a maximum of ten days per year to attend to a family member is ill. Refer to Article 20.2 for full details. Article 20.1 (a) identifies specifically who is considered a family member.

Pandemic Influenza Vaccinations

As soon as it is known when a vaccination will become available, GHS management will communicate this information to all employees. The H1N1 vaccination will become available on (date). The regular flu vaccination will become available on (date). The province of BC has purchased enough H1N1 vaccine for all those who need and want it. These vaccines will be available to all employees at no cost through their physician and/or local health clinic.

An employee may refuse to receive a vaccination. If employees refuse to be vaccinated, the GHS may require them to commence a leave without pay, or to utilize vacation time until the risk of infection at the workplace has been eliminated. In certain

circumstances, employees who are unable to receive vaccinations may be accommodated in the workplace.

Refusal Due to Unsafe Work Conditions

If an employee believes their health is at risk, they are entitled to refuse work until it is determined, by Worksafe BC, that the workplace is safe. If the workplace is deemed to be unsafe, by Worksafe BC, the employee may remain off work until the employer complies with any orders issued by Worksafe BC. Once the workplace is deemed safe for workers by Worksafe BC, the employee must return to work, or face discipline.

Covering Employee Absences

Every attempt will be made to backfill all employee absences. However, in the event that employee absenteeism becomes high, management will review staff availability in relation to client attendance. Service delivery employees may be directed to provide services in a different program area to ensure continuity of service to clients. In the event that the health and safety of GHS clients and employees is considered to be at risk as a result of lack of adequate staff, the management team will consider the decision to send clients home.

MONITORING THE INCIDENCES OF INFLUENZA AT THE GHS

Incidences of Influenza - Employees

Employees are responsible for contacting the GHS when they absent due to influenza type symptoms. The table below indicates the appropriate person for each employee group to contact.

Employee Group	Contact Name
Social Life Skills/Pathways and CRC	MCI/MGS
Supported Employment Services	MES
Administration	DFA
Facilities	EDSO
Management	CEO

CEO – Chief Executive Officer, EDSO-Executive Director Service Operations
DCS – Director, Client Services, MGS- Manager, Geriatric Services
MCI- Manager, Community Inclusion, MES- Manager, Employment Services
DFA – Director, Finance & Administration

Incidences of Influenza – Clients

Clients and/or caregivers/family members are responsible for contacting the key worker or team coordinator when a client is absent due to influenza. If a client is absent and the caregiver/family has not contacted GHS, it is the team coordinators responsibility to follow up with the caregiver to determine if the absence is related to influenza.

Collating Information on the Incidences of Influenza

The information about client absences related to influenza is collated by the team coordinator. The information on employee absences is collated by the contacts identified in the table above.

This collated information is then forwarded **at the end of every day** to the Executive Director Service Operations and the Director, Community Services. The two Directors will review collated information daily. A weekly review of the information will be sent to Occupational Health and Safety Committee and the management team for regular review. The information will be used to guide decision making in regard to influenza pandemic planning.

MANAGING VISITORS, VOLUNTEERS & PRACTICUM STUDENTS DURING A PANDEMIC

Volunteers and practicum students who are not immunized will be excluded from involvement at GHS during an influenza pandemic. Visitors will be discouraged. A notice will be posted at entrance doors indicating a vulnerable population and that if the visitor is ill that they please do not enter.

DECISION MAKING IN REGARD TO CLOSURE OF THE GHS DURING AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

GHS management will work with appropriate authorities, including the Provincial Health Officer, the local Medical Health Officer and CLBC to make the final decision on whether it is necessary to close the facility.

GHS management will, on a weekly basis, check the following websites for applicable information regarding the current and local conditions related to the influenza pandemic.

- BC Centre for Disease Control –
<http://www.bccdc.ca/resourcematerials/newsandalerts/healthalerts/H1N1FluVirusHumanSwineFlu.htm>
- The Government of BC Weekly Updated H1N1 Flu Virus Information Link -
<http://www.gov.bc.ca/>

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL MEASURES

This section provides general information on infection prevention and control.

Infection control measures are actions that can help prevent the spread of the influenza virus in the workplace and other settings.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the cornerstone of infection control, particularly during an influenza pandemic. The GHS will promote hand hygiene by:

1. Teaching clients and staff how to wash their hands.
2. Posting signs reminding clients and staff to wash and/or sanitize their hands in all washrooms and program areas.
3. Making hand washing supplies easily accessible, such as alcohol-based hand sanitizer, soap, water, disposable towels, and garbage cans.
4. Making hand sanitizer available at convenient locations throughout the building, such as at entrances to the building, in hallways, in programming areas and by the elevator.

Hand washing procedure

1. Wet hands.
2. Apply soap.
3. Lather for 20 seconds. Rub between fingers, back of hands, fingertips, under nails.
4. Rinse well under running water.
5. Dry hands well with paper towel or hot air blower.
6. Turn taps off with paper towel, if available.

Hand sanitizing procedure

1. Apply the alcohol-based sanitizer to the palm of one hand.
2. Rub hands together.
3. Work the sanitizer in between fingers, the back of hands, and fingertips (covering all a. parts of the hands and fingers).
4. Keep rubbing hands until they are dry.

Practicing Respiratory Etiquette

The GHS will encourage people to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze. This will help stop the spread of germs that can make people sick. Clients and staff will be reminded that it is important to keep your distance (e.g., more than one metre/three feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing.

Cover your cough procedure

1. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or, if no tissues are available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve/elbow area, not your hands.
2. Put your used tissues into the wastebasket.
3. Wash your hands with soap and water or clean them with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
4. Sanitizer.

Avoid Touching Your Eyes, Mouth and Nose

Influenza spreads when the infected respiratory secretions from the mouth or nose of one person come into contact with the mucous membranes (mouth, nose or eyes) of another person.

Without even realizing it, you may touch the infected nose and mouth secretions of someone who has influenza (e.g., by shaking hands). If you go on to touch your mouth, nose or eyes, the influenza virus may gain entry into your body, causing infection. The GHS will make this information part of the infection control training.

Use Of Masks

The GHS will supply N95 masks to all employees.

The GHS has learned that the use of masks is a difficult and unresolved issue as it appears there is no evidence that the use of masks in public will protect an individual from infection when the influenza virus is circulating widely in the community. However, a person wearing a surgical mask properly at the time of exposure to influenza may benefit from the barrier that a mask provides.

Instructions for Putting on N95 Masks

1. Wash your hands before putting on a mask
2. Inspect the respirator face piece to make sure there are no holes in the breathing zone. The only holes should be around the staples.
3. Hold respirator in your hand with the metal adjusting strip away from you, allowing the headbands to hang below your hands.
4. Press the respirator firmly against your face with the narrow end on the bridge of your nose.

5. Pull the top strap over your head and position it high on the back of your head. Pull the bottom strap over your head and position it below your ears.
6. Using both hands, mould the metal strip to the shape of your nose.
7. Check the face piece seal by cupping both hands over the respirator and inhale vigorously. A negative pressure (slight suction) should be detected inside the face piece. If air leaks in from around the edges reposition the straps. Repeat as necessary until no air leak is detected.

Disposing of Mask Procedure

1. To remove a mask, the front of the mask is 'dirty'; handle by headbands.
2. Remove from face in a downward direction using headbands.
3. Dispose of the mask in garbage can.
4. Do not re-use the mask.
5. Wash hands after removing the mask.

Cleaning Workplaces

People with influenza may contaminate their surroundings with respiratory secretions from their nose and mouth. Surfaces that are touched frequently by people (e.g., doorknobs, computer terminals, bathroom faucets or other shared equipment) should be cleaned more often than usual during a pandemic, if possible. Regular cleaning products easily kill the influenza virus, therefore special cleaning agents or disinfectants are not required. Organizations should follow their current infection control protocols for cleaning and disinfecting. Garbage created by a person with known or suspect influenza does not need any special handling and may be placed with the regular garbage for disposal.

The GHS has cleaning protocols as documented in policy #7.5 that support the above cleaning protocols. In addition, for the purposes of addressing the concerns related to pandemic influenza, the GHS has added the following cleaning protocols.

1. Twice daily the day janitor cleans all surfaces that are touched frequently by people. For example, banisters, door knobs, light switches, and elevator surfaces.
2. Mid day cleaning by day janitor of all communal bathrooms.

Social Distancing In the Workplace

The GHS recognizes that during an influenza pandemic, the more people that individuals come in contact with, the more they are at risk of coming in contact with someone who is infected with influenza. Social distancing means reducing or avoiding contact with other people as much as possible.

The GHS recommends the following workplace strategies to achieve this:

1. Minimizing contact with others by using stairs instead of crowded elevators.
2. Staying one metre (three feet) away from others when a meeting is necessary.
3. Avoid shaking hands, hugging, or kissing people.

Use Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The GHS recognizes that clients who have symptoms of influenza may need to be supported at GHS until they are returned home. Due to these circumstances the GHS recommends the use of personal protective equipment, such as N95 masks and gloves.

1. Sit next to rather than in front of a coughing client when providing care.
2. Wear a surgical mask when providing direct care to an ill client with influenza-like illness.
3. Gloves are mandatory when there is a risk of hand contact with a client's body fluids.

How to Put On Gloves

1. Gloves should be used whenever physical contact is expected with any bodily fluid (e.g., saliva, blood, mucous, stool).
2. Wash your hands before putting on gloves.
3. Pull gloves onto your hands.
4. Change gloves between caring for different individuals.

How to Remove Gloves

1. To remove gloves, pull the first glove off without touching your hand (glove to glove) and roll the glove inside out as you slip it off. Pull the second glove off by sliding your finger inside the glove (skin to skin) and roll the glove inside out as you slip it off.
2. Dispose of the gloves in a garbage can.
3. Do not re-use gloves.
4. Wash your hands after removing gloves.

Food Preparation

During an influenza pandemic, the GHS will reinforce proper food safety and sanitation practices. To do this GHS will:

1. Reinforce regular hand washing by staff members who prepare food
2. Discourage the sharing of dishes, cutlery, and other items

How to Determine If Someone Has a Fever

It is important to confirm a fever by checking temperature with supplied thermometers. GHS supplies two digital ear (tympanic) thermometers. One is in the first aid room in the lower shelving unit. The second is in the first aid kit in the reception area. Both come supplied with disposable sleeves to be used when taking a temperature. Someone has a fever if the tympanic temperature is 38 degrees Celsius or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

Steps to take a temperature

1. Wash hands and put on disposable gloves.
2. Remove cover from the digital thermometer.
3. Place disposable sleeve over insertion point.
4. Turn on digital thermometer by pressing green start button.
5. Place insertion point into ear gently.
6. Press green start button one more time.
7. Wait for long beep.
8. Remove from ear and check temperature on screen.
9. Dispose of sleeve by pressing button under insertion point.

GHS EMPLOYEE TRAINING

In the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak, the GHS will provide employees with information sessions on:

- Infection control
- Use of personal protective equipment
- How GHS will manage the situation
- Making employees aware that EAP (Employee Assistance Program) is available to staff – contact number is 1-800-663-9099

AUDIT

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