

Preparing for the Flu (Including 2009 H1N1 Flu)

A Communication Toolkit for Public Libraries in New York State

Public libraries play a central role in disseminating H1N1 information to their communities. Library websites that feature a priority link to H1N1 information, handouts for pick up in the library, and library programming and reference services all assist individuals and community agencies to make informed decisions during the flu season.

NOTE:

The following toolkit is adapted for Public Libraries from the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's *Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Businesses and Employers*. Please see <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/toolkit/> for more detailed information, including:

- More Questions and Answers about CDC's Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to the 2009-2010 Influenza Season
- Fact Sheet for Employers
 - Action Steps to keep Your Business and Employees Healthy
- Fact Sheet for Employees
 - 8 Ways You Can Stay Healthy at Work
- Poster for Workplace Entrances to Remind Sick Employees to Go Home
 - STOP! Do You Feel Sick?
- Template E-mails (or Letters) for Businesses to Send to Employees
 - Flu Season is Starting. Get Ready Now!
 - If You Are Not Feeling Well
 - Staying Healthy
- Text Messages for Businesses to Send to Employees
- Additional Communication Resources for Businesses to Share with Employees



Rationale for Planning

Public libraries may have already been impacted by the spring 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak. Further steps can be taken now to plan the library's response for the 2009-2010 flu season and to slow the spread of flu through public libraries.

Planning from the outset can help protect the library's staff and customers if flu conditions become more severe. Steps now can help:

- minimize disruption to library activities,
- protect employees' health and safety, and
- limit the negative impact to the community, economy, and society.

The following toolkit contains some basics for planning and preparation with links to more detailed information.

How to Plan and Prepare

Q. What should libraries do to prepare?

- **Review your current pandemic flu plan or develop a new plan.** Involve your employees in development and review of the plan.
 - Share your plan with employees and explain what policies, leave options, pay, and benefits will be available to them.
- **Develop the library's plan to disseminate flu related information** – in the library, on the library's homepage, and through community partners.
- **Engage the county or local health department** to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information.
- **Review sick-leave policies** and consider making them flexible and consistent with public health recommendations. Make sure employees are well-aware of these policies.
- **Try to provide flexible leave policies** to allow workers to stay home to care for sick household members or for children, if schools dismiss students or childcare programs close.
- **Share best practices with other community agencies and businesses**
- **Purchase supplies** such as tissues, soap, and alcohol-based hand cleaners to encourage healthful habits in the workplace.

Q. What should a library include in a pandemic flu plan?

A flu response plan should do the following:

- Provide a variety of measures to protect workers and ensure that essential library operations can continue.
- Create policies for flexible sick leave, worksites (e.g., telecommuting), and work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to promote social distancing if flu conditions become more severe.
 - Consider changing library operations (e.g., possibly changing or closing operations in affected areas) and ways to transfer knowledge to key employees.
- Set up triggers and procedures for starting and ending your pandemic flu response plan. Work closely with your local health officials to identify these triggers.
- Establish a process to communicate information to workers and library partners on your pandemic flu response plans and the latest flu information.

Steps for Libraries under Current Flu Conditions

Q. What steps can libraries take to keep employees from getting sick?

Libraries should take the following steps to reduce the likelihood of employees getting sick with flu. These steps should be followed ALL the time, not only during a flu outbreak.

- **Advise all employees to stay home if they are sick** until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- **Encourage respiratory etiquette** by providing
 - education and reminders about covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, and
 - easy access to tissues and trash cans.
- **Encourage hand hygiene** by providing
 - education and reminders about washing their hands, and
 - easy access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- **Routinely clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact** with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended. This may include keyboards or telephones available to multiple users throughout a day.
- **Encourage sick employees at higher risk of complications from flu to contact their health care provider as soon as possible.** Please note that employees need to self-identify whether they are at higher risk because employers cannot ask.
- **Prepare for employees to stay home from work and plan ways for essential library functions to continue.** Employees may stay home because they are sick, need to care for sick household members, or because schools have been dismissed and they need to care for their children. Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that the library can continue operating.
- **Encourage all employees who want protection from flu to get vaccinated for seasonal flu.** Also encourage employees who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications to get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). Review the health benefits you offer your employees and consider including flu vaccination.

Steps for Libraries under More Severe Flu Conditions

Q. What additional steps should libraries and employees take if the flu becomes more severe?

In addition to the steps that libraries should be taking all the time to prevent flu, libraries and employees should consider adding the following steps if flu conditions become more severe.

- **Conduct active screening of employees when they arrive at work.** Ask employees to **self-monitor** for symptoms of flu, such as fever, chills, cough, and/or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. Workers who have flu-like symptoms should be asked to go home. Continue to advise workers to check for any signs of illness before coming to work each day.

- **Extend the time sick employees stay home to at least 7 days.** People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away, even if they feel better sooner. Review sick-leave policies and consider making them flexible and consistent with public health recommendations.
- **Try to change work duties, workspace, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications** to reduce the possibility of getting sick at work. Please note that employees need to self-identify whether they are at higher risk because employers cannot ask. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home, or stay home, if feasible. These employees should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider. People at higher risk for flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes).
- **Prepare for employees to stay home from work and plan ways for essential library functions to continue.** Employees may stay home because they are sick, are at higher risk for complications, need to care for sick household members, or because schools have been dismissed or childcare centers have closed and they need to care for their children. Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that library operations can continue.
- **Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) in the workplace, if possible.
- **Make contingency plans for increased absenteeism caused by illness.** This could include cross training and hiring temporary workers.
- **Provide guidance to employees who are traveling overseas on what to do if they become sick.** Also provide information about possible travel delays, health screenings, and other activities targeted towards travelers leaving other countries for the United States. Health information for travelers can be found at www.cdc.gov/travel.

Q. What can libraries do to increase social distance during a more severe flu outbreak?

Employers should think creatively about ways to increase the space between people, while still keeping the library operating. Some options for social distancing are:

- cancelling non-essential face-to-face meetings and trying conference calls or Internet-based meetings instead,
- cancelling library programs,
- spacing workers and customers farther apart in the library,
- allowing flexible work hours so fewer workers will be in the library at the same time, and
- offering tele-work options for employees.

Q. How will libraries know if the flu is more severe and they should consider taking additional action steps?

CDC and its partners will continue to monitor the spread of flu, the severity of the illness it's causing, and whether the virus is changing. State and local health departments will also be on the lookout for increases in severe illness in their areas and will provide guidance to their communities. Libraries should work closely with county and local public health officials to guide their flu response. Public health agencies will communicate changes in severity and the extent of flu-like illness to ensure that libraries have the information they need to choose the right steps to reduce the impact of flu.

Quick Reference for Libraries and Employers 2009-2010 Influenza Season Planning and Response

Local flu conditions will influence the decisions that local public health officials make regarding community-level strategies to lessen the spread of flu. Know where to get timely and accurate information that can guide your responses in each location where your operations reside. Be prepared to use multiple measures to protect workers and ensure continuity of library operations.

Recommended Action Steps for Libraries under Current Flu Conditions (similar severity as in Spring/Summer 2009)

Advise the public, through the library web page and other community web resources, local press, signage, and other library communication tools, about the community's flu status; how residents may obtain additional information; steps the library is taking to inform the public and prevent the spread of flu in the community.

Sick employees and customers should stay home.

People with symptoms of flu-like illness should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever.

Sick employees at work should be sent home.

Employees who appear to have a flu-like illness upon arrival or become sick during the work day should be promptly separated from others and sent home.

Encourage your employees and customers to wash their hands often.

Instruct employees to wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing.

Encourage your employees and customers to cover their coughs and sneezes.

Communicate the importance of covering coughs and sneezes and provide tissues and no-touch wastebaskets.

Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.

Clean surfaces that are frequently touched with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

Encourage employees to get vaccinated.

Encourage employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and employees at higher risk for flu complications to get vaccinated for 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available to them.

Protect employees who are at higher risk for complications of flu.

Employees at higher risk for complications of flu, like pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and asthma, should check with their health care provider promptly, if they become sick. Encourage these employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu as recommended when vaccines are available. Early

treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at higher risk for flu complications because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

Prepare for increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members and plan ways for essential library functions to continue.
Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that library operations can continue.

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps. Advise workers to check for signs of flu-like illness before traveling, to notify their supervisor, and stay home if they are sick. Tell employees who are traveling how to seek health care if they become sick and need care. If employees become sick during travel, they should stay in their hotel room unless they are seeking medical care.

Prepare for the possibility of school dismissals or temporary closure of child care programs. Allow workers to stay home to take care of their children if schools are dismissed or child care programs are closed. Encourage your employees with children to plan for child care alternatives if possible. Have library policies regarding supervision of children in place and posted on web site and in library.

8 Ways You Can Stay Healthy at Work

You can protect yourself and others by following these key action steps.

- 1.** Maintain a healthy lifestyle through rest, diet, exercise, and relaxation.
- 2.** Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- 3.** Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes. Germs spread this way.
- 4.** Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your elbow. Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash receptacles.
- 5.** Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean, such as telephones, computer keyboards, doorknobs, etc.
- 6.** Do not use other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. If you need to use a co-worker's phone, desk, or other equipment clean it first.

7. Don't spread the flu! If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home. Symptoms of flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or chills *and* cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. CDC recommends that sick workers stay home if they are sick with flu-like illness until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

8. Get vaccinated against seasonal flu, when vaccine is available in your area. If you are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications you should receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/vaccination/acip.htm

For more information:

Visit: www.flu.gov

Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day

1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)

TTY: (888) 232-6348

cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Additional H1N1 Web Resources for Libraries:

NY State Education Department – H1N1 Site

<http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>

NY State Department of Health H1N1 Site

www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/

2009 H1N1 Flu Resources for Businesses and Employers

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Flu Web Site for Businesses

www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/pandemicflu/index.html

Hotline: 1-800-321-OSHA

What Employers Can Do to Protect Workers from

Pandemic Influenza (OSHA)

www.osha.gov/Publications/employers-protect-workers-flu-factsheet.html

Healthcare Workplaces Classified as Very High or High Exposure Risk for

Pandemic Influenza

www.osha.gov/Publications/exposure-risk-classification-factsheet.html

Considerations for Antiviral Drug Stockpiling by Employers in

Preparation for an Influenza Pandemic

www.flu.gov/vaccine/antiviral_employers.html

Workplace Questions

www.flu.gov/faq/workplace_questions

Community Mitigation Measures

www.flu.gov/plan/community/commitigation.html

Occupational Health Issues Associated with H1N1 Flu

www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/h1n1flu

Disaster Assistance and Recovery Resources

www.asbdc-us.org/Resources/Disaster.html

Central Repository of Federal Disaster Assistance

www.disasterassistance.gov

Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Preparedness Page

www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/disasterpreparedness/index.html

Business Emergency Plan Resources

www.ready.gov/business

Information on 2009 H1N1 Flu

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

Information on Seasonal Flu

www.cdc.gov/flu

K-12 Schools

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/toolkit/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/toolkit/pdf/schoolflutoolkit.pdf>

Colleges / Universities

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/institutions/toolkit/>

http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/institutions/toolkit/pdf/InstitutionsHigherEducation_toolkit.pdf