

THE PROTESTANT SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD
OF THE TOWN OF PENETANGUISHENE

PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN

APPENDIX A

For School Administrators/System Managers

February 2022

PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene has the responsibility to ensure the safety of staff, students, volunteers and visitors inside Board buildings, on Board property and in the community. This plan is to be used when a Pandemic is declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) anywhere in the world. It is designed to assist the Board and Burkevale Protestant Separate School throughout the various stages of the pandemic. This document will NOT cover every situation that may be encountered during a pandemic but provides a basic outline to be followed.

GENERAL INFORMATION

For many years, public health officials from around the world have warned that a pandemic will eventually happen. Earlier serious transmissions of viruses such as SARs (severe acute respiratory system), and the avian (bird flu) influenza which resulted in sickness and death heightened the concern of a worldwide pandemic eventually occurring. The recent infectious disease events (COVID-19) in the province, country and the world reinforces the need for the Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene (PSSBP) to update the current infectious disease plan in order for all staff and the school community to be aware of the processes and procedures required to manage unexpected or escalating infectious disease threats.

PURPOSE

To have a detailed plan that can be used to prepare for and respond to infectious disease threats (human and environmental). The plan will help minimize the potential harmful effects of an infectious disease emergency.

For the purpose of the Pandemic Plan, an infectious disease emergency is defined as an event caused by biological agents, such as bacteria, viruses or toxins that have the potential to cause significant illness or death in the population. Infectious disease emergencies may include:

- Naturally occurring outbreaks, e.g., coronavirus, measles, mumps, etc;
- Emerging infectious diseases, e.g., Ebola, Avian Influenza;
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) lapses, and bioterrorism, e.g., anthrax.

The circumstances of infectious disease emergencies may vary by multiple factors, including type of agent, scale of exposure, mode of transmission and intentionality (bioterrorism). Some outbreaks or situations will require limited response activities; other situations will require large-scale response efforts that involve many resources within the Board and the cooperation and coordination of health care stakeholders and community partners.

DEFINITIONS

Influenza - Influenza is a highly contagious, febrile, acute respiratory infection of the nose, throat, bronchial tubes, and lungs caused by an influenza virus. It is responsible for potentially fatal clinical illness of epidemic and pandemic levels.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) - Infection prevention and control refers to practices and procedures that when applied consistently, can prevent or reduce the risk of transmission of microorganisms to students, staff and visitors to our school and/or board office locations.

Pandemic - Pandemics refer to influenza based or other emerging infectious diseases that occur over a large geographic area and affect a large proportion of the population.

Emerging Infectious Disease - An emerging infectious disease is a disease that is highly infectious and spreading. Examples of emerging infectious diseases include Avian Influenza, swine flu, Ebola, SARS, MERS, and novel Coronavirus'.

Medical Officer of Health (MOH) - the medical officer of health is authorized under Section 22 of the *Health Promotion and Protection Act* (HPPA) to issue orders under prescribed conditions to control communicable diseases.

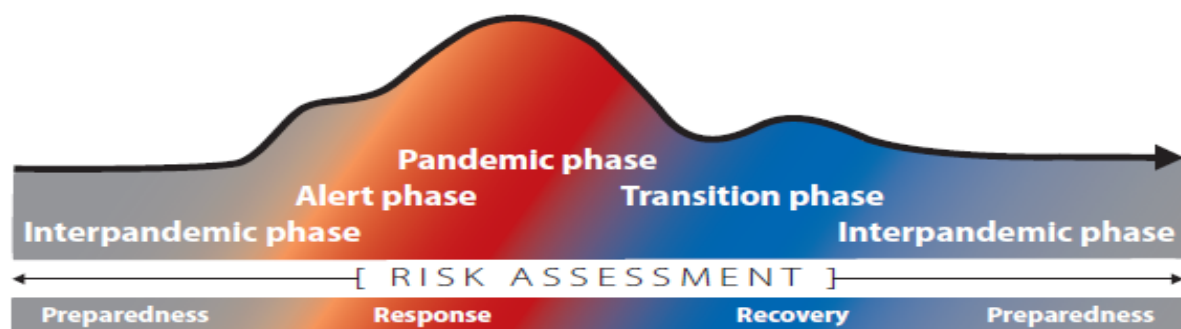
World Health Organization (WHO) - World Health Organization consists of a global network of laboratories and surveillance apparatus that monitor for the emergence of new influenza or other emerging infectious diseases. The World Health Organization determines if such outbreaks are capable of becoming pandemics.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) PANDEMIC PHASES

The WHO has identified four global phases: interpandemic, alert, pandemic and transition, to describe the spread of pandemic (specifically influenza). As pandemic viruses emerge, countries and regions face different risks at different times and so we must also work closely with our local health authorities to take into account local risk assessments.

The WHO revised pandemic phases in 2017, in recognition that a risk assessment based approach would allow for greater flexibility in responding to emerging pandemic/infectious disease outbreak threats.

Figure 1. The continuum of pandemic phases^a



^a This continuum is according to a "global average" of cases, over time, based on continued risk assessment and consistent with the broader emergency risk management continuum.

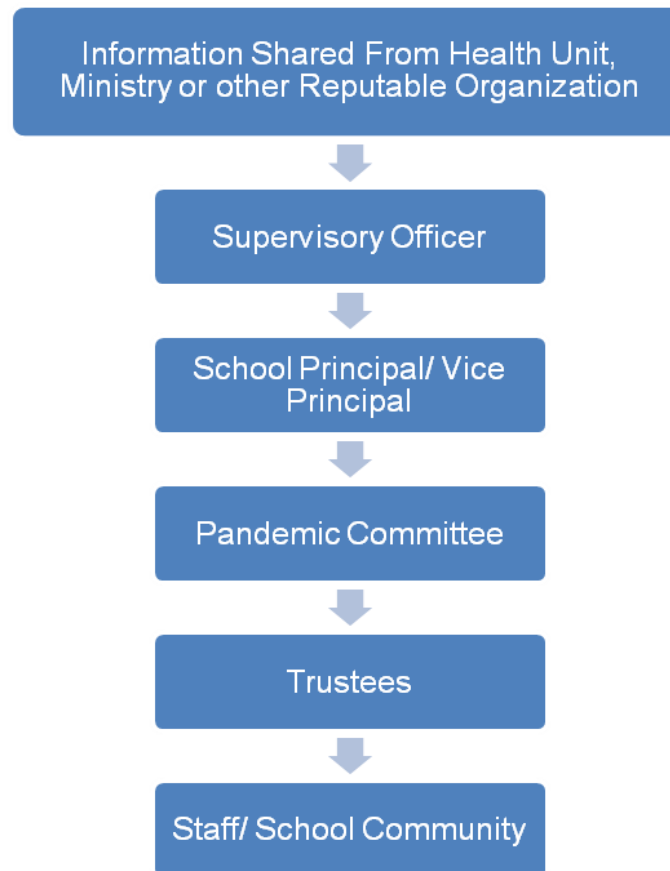
Interpandemic Phase: This is the period between influenza pandemics.

Alert Phase: This is the phase when influenza caused by a new subtype has been identified in humans. Increased vigilance and careful risk assessment, at local, national and global levels, are characteristic of this phase. If the risk assessments indicate that the new virus is not developing into a pandemic strain, a de-escalation of activities towards those in the interpandemic phase may occur.

Pandemic Phase: This is the period of global spread of human influenza caused by a new subtype based on global surveillance. Movement between the interpandemic, alert and pandemic phases may occur quickly or gradually as indicated by the global risk assessment, principally based on virological, epidemiological and clinical data.

Transition Phase: As the assessed global risk reduces, de-escalation of global actions may occur, and reduction in response activities or movement towards recovery actions by countries may be appropriate, according to their own risk assessments.

COMMUNICATIONS/ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW CHART (For Information Sharing During Pandemic Phases)



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role of Pandemic Committee

When a pandemic or infectious outbreak is declared, the Pandemic Committee will be activated and be responsible for the following:

- To monitor and make recommendations on the overall operation of the system on a regular basis;
- To make clear and complete assessment of situations that may arise;
- To act as an emergency resource for the principal, vice principal, managers and other Board personnel

Committee Membership

- Supervisory Officer
- Principal
- Vice Principal
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Liaison
- Mental Health Lead
- Manager of Finance
- Health and Safety Committee Rep (Staff and Board)
- Board Chair/designate
- Administrative support as required

Depending upon the stage (alert, response or recovery phase) and severity of the pandemic, certain tasks may be assigned to specific members of the committee based on their knowledge and expertise in order to facilitate continuity of programs, services and business functions.

ITEMS	DETAILS	PANDEMIC PHASES		
		<i>Alert</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Recovery</i>
Extra Curricular	Interschool, Intramurals	Monitor	Review with possible restrictions/suspend	
Field Trips/Excursions	Day trips, Grade 8 trips	Monitor/refund	Possible cancellation	
Special Lunch Days	pizza, subs, etc	Monitor	Review with possible restrictions/cancel	
Nutrition Programs	Food preparation	Monitor	Implement safety measures/possibly cancel	
Parent-Teacher Interviews	Parent communication must be maintained however possible	Monitor	Modify format i.e. Virtual	
Instruction/Evaluation/Reporting	Where possible, the regular instructional program and those activities related to instruction, evaluation and reporting will continue	Monitor	Review with possible modifications	
Professional Development Activities	Whenever possible, the regular professional development will be maintained	Monitor	Implementation may be modified	

ITEMS	DETAILS	PANDEMIC PHASES		
		<i>Alert</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Recovery</i>
School Council	Principal will have a plan for on-going communication with the Chair of the school council	Monitor	Possibly virtual	
Partial School Closures	Specific areas of the school - i.e. Gymnasium, Library	Monitor	Review with possible restrictions/closures	
Graduation	Providing some form of ceremony/celebration to acknowledge grade 8 students	Monitor	Modify format i.e. Virtual	
Safe Arrival	Ensuring student safety through daily attendance	Monitor	Teacher communication with Office	
School Visitors	Ensuring safety of staff and students in the school by limiting access of others	Monitor	Limited access to no access possible	
Volunteers	Ensuring safety of staff and students in the school by limiting access of others	Monitor	Limited access to no access possible	
Transportation	Regular bus transportation will be maintained whenever possible	Monitor	Modified/restricted seating capacity	

Role of Supervisory Officer/Designate

- To direct the overall operation of the system;
- To make decisions regarding the operation of the School;
- To review information items and news releases prepared by the Pandemic
- To determine the closing of the school, in consultation with the health Unit, due to excessive absenteeism; and
- To be the spokesperson for all communications initiatives

Role of the Principal/Vice Principal/Leads

The role of the principal/vice principal and Leads during a pandemic is to maintain the safety and well-being of students and staff. They also provide and support academic programming within the limitations of available employees and resources.

They shall:

- Advise and oversee staff as they fulfill their responsibilities during a pandemic;
- Ensure the security of the property;
- Ensure that student and staff absenteeism is reported in accordance with attendance procedures as directed; and
- Monitor and report staff safety concerns

Role of Employees

Staff who are on duty either at the school or working in a remote capacity are expected to fulfill the assignments established by the principal and/or supervisor. These will be governed by safety considerations. Staff may be required to extend beyond their usual functions to assist other staff and/or complete other duties as required.

General School Board Operations

- The Board has a statutory responsibility to maintain school operations and keep the Board Office and all schools open. However, the Provincial Government of Ontario, and its agencies, may determine that schools be closed during a pandemic, or other infectious disease outbreak.
- In consultation with the local Health Unit, individual classrooms in the school may be closed during a pandemic, or other infectious disease outbreak.
- Unless the school or individual classrooms are closed, the decision to attend during a pandemic emergency is left to the parents/guardians.
- The closed school/individual classrooms will be re-opened in consultation with local health authorities. The school will also be subject to enhanced Infection Prevention and Control disinfection after any period of closure.

Operational Strategies

- The Pandemic Committee will meet as needed on an adhoc basis throughout the alert and recovery phases. Throughout the response phase, the meetings will increase in frequency and duration as needed. Meetings will be called by the Pandemic Committee Chair or designate.
- The Pandemic Committee will respond to ongoing pandemic events and revise action plans as needed.
- All media requests will be handled by the Supervisory Officer and will be the spokesperson for all media interviews.

Communications Planning

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide our decision making and help share our communication strategies:

- Decisions about closing schools for health reasons will be made by government/health authorities.
- Decisions about closing schools due to safety concerns, e.g., an inability to provide adequate supervision, will be made by the Supervisory Officer.
- All decisions will be based on available information and with the best interests of students/staff in mind.

- Stakeholders will be informed about our plans and contingency actions.

Target Audience/Stakeholder

External stakeholders:

- Ministry of Education
- Local Health Authorities
- Community Partners
- Media
- Local Churches

Internal Stakeholders

- Staff
- Parents
- Students
- Trustees

Key Messages

- The health, safety and well-being of our students and staff is our main priority.
- The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene has a Pandemic Plan which is posted for all stakeholders to view.
- One of our priorities is to keep our school and board office open as long as it is safe to do so.
- The Board may be required to make changes to the delivery of programs and services during a pandemic. These changes will be communicated directly to stakeholders in a timely fashion.
- During a pandemic the Board takes its direction from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and other health authorities.
- The Board fully cooperates with any directives provided by health authorities and/or the Ministry of Education or any other Government Ministry.
- The Board cannot share any personal health information and will only share information related to potential exposure to virus or infectious disease in our school through the direction of the Health Unit.

- The focus of the Board is to provide our families with information and resources related to student learning, mental health and well-being.

References

Actions taken during an emergency must be guided by a legal/legislative framework that gives authority to the municipality, public health unit and others for their actions. For the purposes of the Board's pandemic plan the following legislative acts and authorities are referenced:

Legislation and Acts

- Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990 H.7
- Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, S.O. 2004, c.3
- Quarantine Act, S.C. 2005, c. 20
- Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.O.1
- Designation of Diseases O. Reg. 135/18
- Communicable Diseases - General R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 557
- Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.E.9
- Employment Standards Act, 2000, SO 2000, c 41