



What is the Oklahoma Pandemic Influenza Management Plan?

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new flu virus emerges and causes illness in a large number of people in several countries worldwide. A pandemic indicates the geographic spread of disease, not its severity. Historically, an average of three influenza pandemics occur each century. Prior to the 2009 influenza A (H1N1) pandemic, the last occurred from 1968-69. Because of the larger number of ill people, a future influenza pandemic may strain existing health resources. The Oklahoma State Department of Health's (OSDH) Pandemic Influenza Committee developed a management plan to address the public health response to a pandemic of influenza. It is intended to be a resource document for public health preparedness at the state, regional, and local level to help maximize and distribute available resources.

What are the purpose and the goals of the plan?

The overall goals of the Oklahoma Pandemic Influenza Management Plan are to:

- reduce disease and death among Oklahomans during a serious influenza season;
- minimize disruption in basic facilities and services as well as the subsequent economic impact that may occur during an influenza pandemic;
- assist and facilitate preparedness in the health care systems within the state;
- provide a comprehensive and dynamic plan that will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis; and
- assist and facilitate appropriate planning and response at the local, regional, and state level.

What specifically does the Oklahoma Pandemic Influenza Management Plan address?

The plan addresses disease surveillance, emergency management, vaccine and antiviral medication delivery, communication activities, and response coordination among multiple agencies. The essential elements of the plan are described in ten chapters which are: 1) command and management; 2) surveillance and laboratory diagnostics; 3) delivery of vaccine; 4) acquisition and delivery of antiviral medications; 5) health systems emergency response; 6) community disease control and prevention; 7) infection prevention and control; 8) clinical guidelines; 9) risk communication; and 10) workforce psychosocial support.

What is addressed in the element of command and management?

A pandemic of influenza will require strong and decisive leadership by knowledgeable public health practitioners. The OSDH will lead the state response to an influenza pandemic and coordinate public health activities with other state, local, and federal agencies.

What is addressed in the element of surveillance and laboratory diagnostics?

Rapid response to a pandemic will require early detection of the pandemic flu virus strain as well as an understanding of its disease distribution within the population. The OSDH Acute Disease Service (ADS) in cooperation with the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) is responsible for conducting influenza surveillance. They work with physicians and hospitals to monitor the number of patient visits for influenza-like illness and provide laboratory assistance for virus testing and characterization. Epidemiologists in the ADS will develop and implement strategies to control the spread of the pandemic-associated illness.

What is addressed in the element of delivery of vaccine and acquisition and delivery of antiviral medications?

At the start of a pandemic, there may be a greater demand for medication and vaccine if available. These elements outline the strategies of how and to whom the antiviral medications would be given. Supply may be limited due to the time required to produce vaccine, therefore distribution categories will be outlined to ensure that the state's critical infrastructure, prioritization, and protection of the citizens of the state will be addressed.

What is addressed in the element of health systems and emergency response?

Depending on the ability of the virus to cause serious disease (pathogenicity), a pandemic of influenza could overwhelm the health care system. It is essential that each county and region prepare by developing a local pandemic influenza management plan congruent with the state plan that includes strategies for patient triage, respiratory infection control, and alternate medical care facilities.

What is addressed in the element of community disease control and prevention?

Especially during the early stages of an influenza pandemic, non-medical strategies such as voluntary quarantine, travel restrictions, school closures, and other methods of “social distancing” will likely be needed to contain the spread of disease. This element describes containment measures and discusses their application at the individual and community level.

What is addressed in the element of infection prevention and control?

This section of the plan is directly adapted from the National Pandemic Influenza Plan, Supplement 4 S-1 and provides guidance to health care workers on the use of infection prevention and control measures to prevent transmission of influenza during patient care.

What is addressed in the element of clinical guidelines?

Health care providers will play an essential role in the detection of an initial case of novel or pandemic influenza. If implemented early, identification and isolation of cases may help slow the spread of influenza within a community or region. Clinical awareness benefits the individual patient, as rapid diagnosis and treatment may prevent severe complications. This element is adapted from the National Pandemic Influenza Plan, Supplement 5 S-1 and provides instructions on the clinical procedures for the initial screening, assessment, and management of patients with suspected novel or pandemic influenza.

What is addressed in the element of risk communication?

The primary objective of this element is to provide timely and accurate communication to keep the public, health care providers, and government leaders informed during a pandemic of influenza. To successfully cope with a pandemic, the public may expect to receive public health messages concerning travel advisories, respiratory hygiene practices, and schedules for vaccine administration. It is essential for the public to receive, understand, and follow these messages.

What is addressed in the element of workforce psychosocial support?

The response to an influenza pandemic will pose substantial physical, personal, social, and emotional challenges to health care providers, public health officials, emergency responders, and essential service workers. This element details the mechanisms needed in place to provide assurances that the workforce responding during a pandemic of influenza receives the emotional and mental health support to remain effective and to reduce post-stress symptoms.