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## Thompson School District Pandemic Plan Summary/Parents

The Thompson School District has worked with the Larimer County Health Department, the Colorado Department of Health and other area school districts to devise plans for a pandemic flu using guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control. This is a parent/student summary of the district's larger report that also addresses staffing and other internal issues during a pandemic that causes school or building closures. A Pandemic Flu Task Force was initiated at Thompson School District to create a plan for addressing possible outbreaks. This plan's actions intend to:

- a. Prevent or minimize the spread of illness through the use of education, information and if necessary, closure
- b. Preserve continuity of essential school functions
- c. Minimize educational and social disruption
- d. Minimize academic and economic losses

## Definitions and Findings

- A pandemic is a public health emergency that happens when an animal flu virus changes so that it affects and spreads easily among people.
- The course of pandemic influenza will be governed by factors that cannot be known in advance.
- Planning is an essential component of pandemic influenza preparedness.
- Experts anticipate that an influenza pandemic could last from 18 months to several years, with at least two peak waves of activity. In an affected community, an outbreak could last from three to eight weeks. Following the pandemic, the new viral subtype is likely to continue circulating and contribute to seasonal influenza.
- No one will be immune to the pandemic influenza subtype.
- Vaccinations and antiviral treatment are anticipated to be the most effective medical treatments, but they may be nonexistent or in limited supply.
- Risk groups for severe and fatal infections cannot be predicted with certainty.
- The typical incubation period for respiratory influenza averages two days.
- Non-medical containment measures based on current epidemiological knowledge of influenza will be the principal means of disease control until vaccinations are available, but decisions about non-medical containment measures will be made in an atmosphere of considerable uncertainty and as directed by The Center for Disease Control and state and local health departments.
- Availability of utilities and access to technology, including the Internet is unknown.
- The seasonality of a pandemic cannot be predicted with certainty. The largest "waves" in the U.S. during 20th century pandemics occurred in the fall and winter.

## District Prevention Strategies and Processes

Given the information above, district staff and parents cannot prevent a flu outbreak, but steps are being taken to minimize the spread.

### 1. Before the Pandemic:

- **Planning:** Establish a leadership team (Pandemic Flu Taskforce), identify essential staff functions, review district policies, and plan for communication.
- **Education and Prevention:** Introduce an educational campaign for students and staff on the importance of hand washing to help keep from getting sick and spreading illness. This could include signs posted at the schools, morning announcements, newsletter articles, and in-service training to students and staff on ways to help keep from spreading illness (hand washing, coughing/sneezing into your elbow, etc.) to support the campaign.

### 2. During the Pandemic:

- **Surveillance:** The coordinator for student health services maintains direct communication with state and local health departments regarding the progression of illness in the community, district, and surrounding areas. Health

services staff will monitor employees and students for influenza-like symptoms and follow public health reporting guidelines for illness and absenteeism.

- **Communicate:** Health services staff will provide continuous education and support regarding hand washing, incubation periods, contagious periods and transmission routes, prevention strategies for influenza as well as other contagious illnesses; provide up to date cleaning recommendations; and provide information for classrooms, gyms and locker rooms, kitchens and custodial areas, as well as ensure an adequate stock of needed supplies. The district will issue statements from school/health department with instructions on identifying symptoms, how to care for the sick, and how long the sick should stay home before returning to school. Flu updates will be included in school newsletters, the Infinite Campus parent portal, the district Web site at [www.thompsonschoools.org](http://www.thompsonschoools.org) and in more pressing circumstances, sent home through students.
- **Transportation Services:** Provides routine cleaning for all buses (this influenza does not require any new or additional cleaning procedures).
- **Custodial Services:** Custodians typically step up the cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces (phones, door handles, desks, & water fountains) during flu season. They work in conjunction with the Information/Technology department to determine what steps can be taken to reduce the spread of germs from computer use in lab settings.
- **Food Services:** This area is already subject to rigorous cleanliness standards imposed by the health department. However, common areas in the lunchrooms need to be sanitized, specifically, silverware and salad bars. Use menus to promote healthy eating habits.
- **Hand washing/hand sanitizer:** Hand washing is the single most-effective method of preventing illness. The use of hand sanitizer is not an appropriate substitute for hand washing with soap and warm water. Hand sanitizer does not remove dirt or kill germs in dirt. Because hand sanitizer does kill viruses, students and staff may bring hand sanitizer or sanitizing wipes for personal use but may not share these items with anyone else. The district does not supply hand sanitizer.
- **Respiratory etiquette and precautions:** Students and staff members who present at school with fever and symptoms of influenza may be separated from other students and staff or given a mask to wear until they can leave school grounds. Additionally, much of the education about influenza prevention has focused on the need to cover noses and mouths with tissues when sneezing or coughing (or into the elbow or shirt sleeve when a tissue is not handy).
  - **Current health department recommendations:**
    - Parents are asked to answer these questions each morning before sending your child to school:
      - 1. Does your child have a fever (100° F)?**
      - 2. Does your child have a sore throat, cough, runny nose, body aches, vomiting, or diarrhea?**
    - **If you answered “yes” to both questions above,** your child might have the flu. Keep your child home from school until fever or symptoms of fever are gone for 24 hours (without the aid of medications like Ibuprofen or Tylenol or products containing these).
    - If you answered “yes” to only one question above, keep your child home from school until symptoms are gone for 24 hours.
- **Absences:** Parents of students who miss school for an extended period should work with the principal and teachers at their school to provide homework and assignments for the absent student. Parents of students with health concerns should consult with their physicians regarding recommendations for attendance, flu shots, and antiviral medications. These cases will be handled on an individual basis. Currently, there is no recommendation that healthy students avoid public places.

### 3. After the Pandemic:

- **Recovery:** Continue to monitor for illness, establish a “return to learning” program to get students back on track, and provide counseling to students or staff as needed.
- **Management:** Conduct a debriefing, assess lessons learned and damage assessment, and update plan with any new information. Transition back to the prevention and preparedness phase.