

Pandemic Response

How Michener
will function
in a global
catastrophe

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Michener Services: "A leader in designing and delivering services based on the needs and individual lifestyle choices of Albertans with developmental disabilities."

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Introduction

The germs that cause influenza mutate constantly. It's inevitable that sometime, somewhere, a familiar strain of flu virus will mutate into a deadly version that transmits easily from person to person. Because nobody will be immune to the new virus, it will spread quickly and infect millions of people before a vaccine can be invented and produced in global quantities.

How many people die depends on how lethal the mutation turns out to be. The Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1919 spread across the planet and killed at least 40 million people. The next pandemic could be mild and spare most people it infects or it could kill a generation.

Michener Services has prepared itself for a pandemic as well as any organization possibly can. We have a Human Resources plan that addresses the possibility that 1/3 to 1/2 of our staff will be absent because of illness or family obligations at the height of a pandemic.

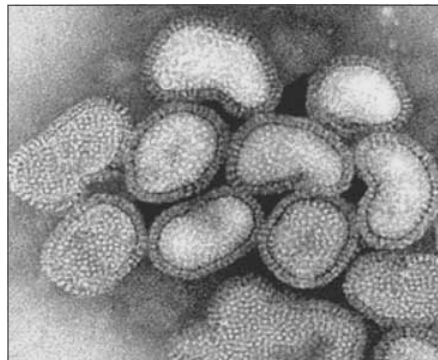
We have increased medical supplies, developed triage guidelines, prepared educational material, devised a communication strategy, and so on. You can see the full Pandemic Preparedness Plan on the Michener website at www.pdd.org/central/michener or you can read this booklet.

We urge you to become informed. This is serious stuff. Deadly serious.

Historical Perspective

The emergence of SARS in 2003 demonstrated how interconnected the world has become and thus how rapidly a new disease can spread. Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), says the SARS outbreak is a chilling omen of how devastating the next influenza pandemic could be in the modern world.

Three times in the last century, influenza A viruses experienced major genetic changes that resulted in global pandemics. The worst was the “Spanish Flu” that killed at least 40 million people in 1918-1919. More recently, two other influenza A pandemics, one in 1957 (“Asian influenza”) and the other in 1968 (“Hong Kong influenza”) caused significant illness and death globally.



The Avian flu virus

Experts at WHO and elsewhere believe the world is now closer to another influenza pandemic than it has been any time since 1968. WHO uses a series of six phases of pandemic alert to measure the seriousness of the threat and the need for progressively more intense precautions.

The world is now in Phase 3.

This means that a new influenza virus subtype is causing disease in humans, but is “not yet spreading efficiently and sustainably among humans.” The subtype is called the H5N1 virus and it causes Avian influenza, or “bird flu.”

Normally, as the name suggests, it infects birds and occasionally pigs, but in recent years it has infected about 100 humans and killed over half of them. The fear is that the virus – if given enough opportunities – will change into a form that is highly infectious for humans and spreads easily from person to person. Such a change could mark the start of a global outbreak (a pandemic).

The word would then be in Phase 6 – and in grave trouble.

Michener Services began preparing for a pandemic in 2005 under the leadership of Wayne Morrow and Derrick Richards. They gathered a committee of representatives from all disciplines at Michener and together they got the organization prepared for disaster and mapped out how Michener will respond if it ever occurs.

The plan is based on several key assumptions about the next pandemic. This booklet begins with a list of these assumptions and then presents a summary of the plan under four broad categories: human resources, health care, information sources and infection control.

Key Assumptions

- ⇒ It is anticipated that 1/3 to 1/2 of Michener's employees will not be available for work because of illness or family emergencies.
- ⇒ The pandemic will last 12 to 18 months. During that time, outbreaks of influenza will come in waves, each lasting six to eight weeks.
- ⇒ The virus that causes the next pandemic will be a new mutation never seen before so a vaccine will not be available in the first wave of illness.
- ⇒ Public Health will oversee and coordinate the delivery of immunization within the region.
- ⇒ All non-essential services will be suspended until the pandemic has been declared finished by the regional and/or provincial health authorities.
- ⇒ Employees at Michener will be reassigned as required under the circumstances. Volunteers and former employees will be called upon for help if available.
- ⇒ Appropriate infection control guidelines will be used to reduce the spread of infection. Hand washing is the single most effective method of limiting the spread of influenza.

Human Resources

The Chief Operating Officer decides if and when to activate the Michener Services pandemic response plan. The COO then establishes the Facility Emergency Response Team to coordinate the movement of staff and individuals receiving service.

As described in Michener's Facility Emergency Response Plan, the Human Resources Department is responsible for setting up and opening a Reception/Allocation Centre at 23 Michener Bend (the South Administration Building).

Staff Procedures

All staff members report to work as normal. If your work area has been closed, you report to the assignment desk located in the reception centre at 23 Michener Bend.

If necessary, you may be assigned to jobs you don't normally perform as long as you are qualified and safe to perform the duties. When you receive a work assignment, you will also get any keys you may need and information on procedures to follow.

Before leaving work, you report to the assignment desk and return any keys you were issued.

If you will be absent from work, call the assignment desk, which will be open from 5:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. After hours call RSO (340-5616) and give the reason for your absence and provide a probable date of return.

Staff members off work are responsible under the plan for keeping the assignment desk updated on a daily basis regarding the status of their absence until they are able to return to work.

Shifts

If adequate numbers of staff are not available, the Michener operation will go to two shifts, a day shift from 7 a.m. to 7:25 p.m. and a night shift from 7 p.m. to 7:25 a.m.

Staff Support

Mental Health will provide crisis intervention services to staff at the request of managers and/or employees. Staff will receive services on a voluntary basis with no mandated “debriefings”. Services will be provided based on availability of staff.

In addition, the Employee Assistance Program may increase services to help employees through this difficult time.

Day Care/Family Care

Human Resources will offer to operate a limited day care facility for employees and volunteers while they’re on duty. It would be set up in the current Lotsa Tots space or in Roland Michener Recreation Centre.

Appendix VI to the plan lists private nursing care agencies that may be able to care for family members at home while employees are at work.

Volunteers

Michener Services may have to rely on volunteers and inactive staff members to assist in the care of individuals receiving service.

All volunteers must be registered with Volunteer Services before arriving on the work site. Volunteers will not replace or displace existing employees. They will fill in where needed.

Staff Development will deliver a modified new-hire orientation to make volunteers available for service in the shortest possible period of time.

Human Resources also has an inventory of skills possessed by staff members at Michener that might enable them to fill in for missing workers or provide auxiliary services such as day care.

Security

A Security Desk will be established. Alberta Infrastructure personnel will man the desk as required, issue and track keys given to staff.

Additional security will be provided if required as the pandemic influenza outbreak continues.

Health Services

A global outbreak of killer flu will eventually overwhelm existing health-care facilities. Red Deer Regional Hospital will not have room for all of the seriously ill people in Red Deer so Michener must be ready to look after its own.

The pandemic preparedness plan has two strategies for managing the increased demand.

The first strategy calls for the establishment of an enhanced care space to look after individuals who are too ill to remain in their homes. Beds and mats for this temporary facility will come from Camp L.G. Barnes.

The second strategy calls for the introduction of triaging. To triage means to sort patients and allocate treatment according to the urgency of their needs and the likelihood of their recovery. It is used to maximize medical resources in times of emergency.

Health Services will set up and operate an assignment desk for nursing. People working at this desk will answer calls for medical help, assess the urgency and assign nurses in accordance with pandemic triage guidelines.

Only a doctor or nurse may admit individuals to the clinic.

Medical care begins in the homes. Home Support staff are responsible for monitoring the health of individuals in their care. If you detect the following conditions, call the nursing assignment desk:

- ⇒ Temperature > 38.5, coughing
- ⇒ Pulse > 100, irregular
- ⇒ R: > 24
- ⇒ O2 sats: blue, < 90%
- ⇒ Chest: any abnormalities
- ⇒ CNS: confused
- ⇒ Vomiting and diarrhea: more than 2 in 24 hours

Other: headaches, joint pains, weakness, anorexia, difficulty breathing, cough with ear ache.

Vaccines and Antivirals

It's worth repeating here that the next pandemic virus will be a new mutation never seen before so a vaccine will not be available in the first wave of illness. No matter how quickly scientists come up with a viable vaccine, it will take many more months to produce enough for the people at most risk of infection.

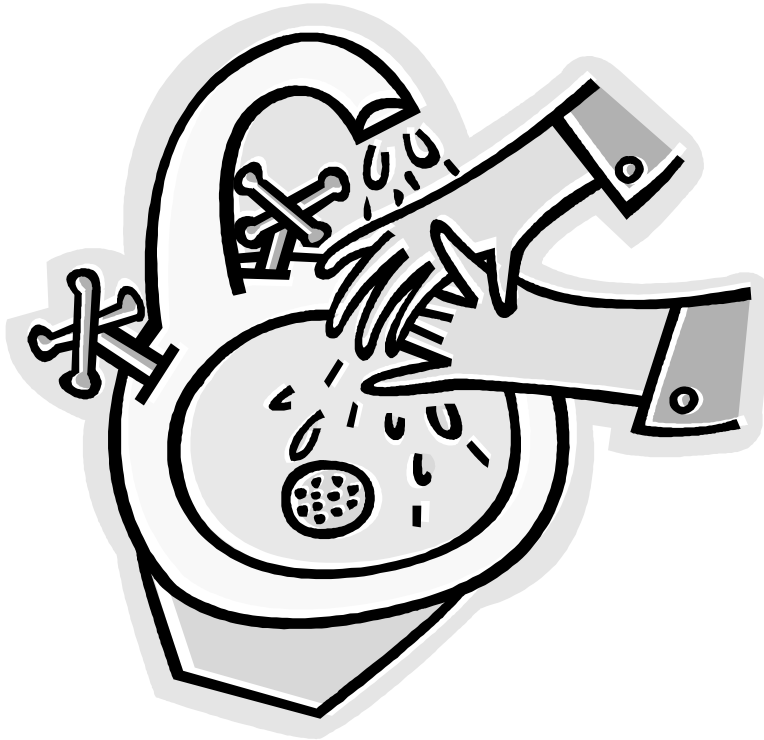
When a vaccine becomes available, therefore, supplies will be limited. The order of priority for vaccination is determined by Health Canada to ensure fairness and consistency across the country.

Antiviral drugs are an adjunct to vaccine for the treatment and prevention of influenza, but they are not a substitute for vaccination. They do not prevent illness by providing immunity.

An antiviral is a medicine that destroys a virus or interferes with its ability to grow and reproduce. It is usually given to patients when they are sick to reduce symptoms, to shorten the length of illness and to minimize serious complications.

When antivirals are used for preventive purposes, people must continue taking them as long as they are exposed to the virus.

Infection Control



The single most effective way to avoid becoming infected with an influenza virus, and to prevent its spread, is to wash your hands. It may seem simplistic, but it's recommended by everyone from the World Health Organization to your mother.

Remember to wash before and after eating, after using the bathroom, after coughing or sneezing, and after touching surfaces that may have been contaminated by other people.

The flu virus is passed from person to person through the air by droplets and small particles sprayed when infected individuals cough or sneeze. You can also become infected if you touch contaminated materials and then rub your eyes or touch your mouth.

It takes between one and four days to develop symptoms. You become infectious one day before you develop symptoms and for a week afterwards.

Here are five ways the Public Health Agency of Canada says you can stay healthy or prevent the spread of influenza if you do become ill:

- ⇒ **Get an annual flu shot:** Make sure your family members get one too.
- ⇒ **Wash your hands frequently:** Twenty seconds of hand washing with warm water and soap helps remove bacteria and viruses.
- ⇒ **Cover up when you cough or sneeze:** Use a tissue, or raise your arm up to your face to cough or sneeze into your sleeve. If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible and wash your hands immediately.
- ⇒ **Keep shared surface areas clean:** Doorknobs, light switches, telephones, keyboards and other surfaces can become contaminated with all kinds of bacteria and viruses.
- ⇒ **If you get sick, stay home!** If you go out when you're sick, you may spread your illness and it may take you longer to get better if you are not well rested. Wait until you no longer have a fever and your cough is improving.

Some additional precautions are recommended for individuals caring for the sick and for essential service workers.

- ⇒ Avoid crowds whenever possible. Disease can spread quickly where people congregate.
- ⇒ Avoid shaking hands, hugging and kissing.
- ⇒ Wear a mask and/or gloves when appropriate.

When to Wear Masks

The Michener Services Pandemic Preparedness Plan recommends staff wear masks when caring for someone who is ill.

During a pandemic, a mask is advisable outside your residence where you come in contact with individuals whose infection status is unknown.

Wear a mask when sharing the same airspace with groups of people infected by the flu virus.

Masks with face shields should be worn to prevent exposure to sprays of blood, body secretions or excretions

Masks are NOT required when working in a room that is physically separate from an ill person

When to Wear Gloves

Staff should wear gloves during a pandemic when caring for someone who is ill, when changing bed linen or cleaning in the sick room and when handling items removed from the sick room for disposal and cleaning.

Final Notes

Garbage Disposal

Most services provided in Red Deer will likely be compromised at some point during a pandemic. If this happens to garbage disposal, Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation, using its own on site equipment, will provide interim garbage pick up and disposal.

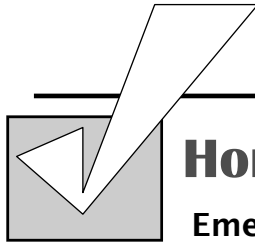
Disposal may include on-site dumping and burning of garbage (north 40 acres) or the hauling of it to the City of Red Deer landfill site by the grounds maintenance contractor.

Support Services

Housekeeping, dietary and laundry have pandemic response plans that tie into the main plan. If you look on the website, you can see details of their strategies in Appendix XII, XIII and XIV respectively.

Emergency Supplies

During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important to have extra supplies on hand. Examples of what you should have in your home at Michener, and your private homes, are listed on the next page.



Home Safety Checklists

Emergency Food and Water Kit

- Water: At least two litres per person per day. Include small bottles that can be carried easily in case of evacuation order
- Canned food such as soups, stews, baked beans, meat, poultry, fish, fruits
- Crackers and biscuits
- Honey, peanut butter, syrup, jam, salt and paper, sugar, instant coffee, tea (Replace canned food and dry goods once a year)
- Manual can opener, disposable cups and plates, fuel stove (do not use a barbecue indoors) and waterproof matches

Emergency Survival Kit

- Flashlight and batteries
- Radio and batteries
- Candles and matches/lighter
- First aid kit
- Extra cash in smaller bills
- A copy of your emergency plan and contact information
- Clothing - one change per person
- Toilet paper and other personal supplies
- Medications
- Backpack to carry kit in case of evacuation
- Whistle
- Playing cards, games

Information Sources

The full version of Michener Service's Pandemic Preparedness Plan can be seen on our website at www.pdd.org/central/michener. Look on the left side of the main page and click the Disaster Planning link.

We recommend three websites as reliable sources of information about influenza and influenza pandemics:

- ⇒ Health Canada (www.hc-sc.gc.ca)
- ⇒ Alberta Health and Wellness (www.health.gov.ab.ca)
- ⇒ World Health Organization (www.who.int/en).

All the relevant links are easy to find.

A brochure from Health Canada titled *Self Care for Caregivers: Responding to the Stress of Terrorism and Armed Conflicts* provides useful information applicable to a pandemic situation. You can find it on the P-Drive in the Pandemic folder.

Information from Alberta Community Development called *How to Care for Yourself and Others with Influenza* is also available in the Pandemic folder on the P-Drive. (Click the computer icon on your desktop to find the P-Drive.)

In the event of a pandemic, the Chief Operating Officer will keep staff informed through emails, handouts, briefings and meetings.

Recorded messages about the latest developments at Michener during a pandemic can be heard by calling the Emergency Hotline at **1-877-733-6733**.

