



MINISTERIAL DIRECTIVE ON INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PLANNING FOR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICES

This directive covers the practices and procedures for pandemic alert periods for influenza and similar communicable disease pandemics in Department of Education offices.

Background

Staff are to follow the directives from health authorities and read and follow Help Desk notices regarding H1N1.

Influenza viruses can survive on some surfaces from several hours to days but are rapidly destroyed by cleaning.

Regular household or commercially available cleaning products are sufficient for this purpose, and waste handling would be according to usual standards.

Principles

- The Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) is the official source of all health-related information. In the case of any discrepancy between HSS documents and this or other Department of Education documents regarding influenza or pandemic planning, the HSS information will take precedence.
- Vigorous scrubbing with soap and water is the best means for prevention of spreading viruses and flu germs.
- Information is to be disseminated to staff in a timely manner and in an appropriate fashion.
- Properly maintained offices should be healthy places even during a pandemic watch, and should remain open if they can be properly maintained.

Definitions

Flu or influenza – Influenza, or flu for short, includes influenza-like illnesses defined as the acute onset of respiratory symptoms with fever and cough. Other symptoms may include:

sore throat, muscle aches, joint pain, weakness, nausea, diarrhea or vomiting and fever may not be prominent.

Office – refers to Headquarters and regional offices for the Department of Education, including community offices for income support workers and career development officers.

Directions

The following directions are mandatory to be followed by all office staff:

1. Individual behaviour

- 1.1 Vigorous scrubbing with soap and water is to be promoted as the best means for prevention of spreading viruses such as the flu, as the mechanical action is effective at removing visible soil as well as microbes.
- 1.2 Learn and employ proper hand washing, proper cough and sneeze etiquette and frequent and routine hand cleaning (i.e. after sneezing or coughing, before and after eating, after recreation/play times, after going to the washroom etc.)
- 1.3 All of the above should be done according to the appropriate HSS promotional posters and materials available from HSS.
- 1.4 When signs of a community outbreak of the flu emerge, direct staff who become ill or are caring for an ill family member to phone the local health centre immediately to report the illness and follow health centre directions carefully.
- 1.5 Staff that become ill are to inform their supervisor immediately to allow effective replacement planning. Staff are reminded to follow any direction from the Department of Human Resources on sick leave procedure during flu outbreaks.

2. Facility Procedures

- 2.1 Each office must develop a plan to ensure continuity of facility management and essential services in case of significant staff illness;
- 2.2 Only the Chief Medical Officer of Health can close a facility due to illness or pandemic.
- 2.3 During times of increased influenza activity there is to be HSS –approved materials regarding the flu displayed prominently in the facility. These may be sent to by the Department of Education or obtained from the local Health Centre.
- 2.4 Staff are not to bring sick family members into the office. If family members are sick and cannot attend school or child care, the sick individual must be cared for at home. Special leave will be granted (and advanced where necessary), in this situation.
- 2.5 Where there are no custodial staff working during the business day, staff are expected to contribute to maintaining a clean office environment throughout the work day.


2.6 Signing authorities are to be in place and recognized where office staff are sick to support continuity of service.

Recommendations

- Disinfecting wipes should be available and used with shared phones, computer keyboards and other commonly shared appliances. These should be used by staff to wipe shared items throughout the day.
- Staff should supplement custodial work with additional cleaning of frequently touched items in their office environment.
- Client-focused offices should post signs clearly stating the expectation that clients use proper coughing and sneezing etiquette, as well as the sanitizer provided

Sunset

This policy applies until it is revoked by the Minister of Education or until June 30th, 2017.


Hon Paul Quassa,
Minister of Education

Feb. 11/2014
Date

The above information is adapted from website materials by the Public Health Agency of Canada (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/interim-provisaires0819-eng.php>)