

## **CRITERIA AND PROCEDURE**

**BROAD SUBJECT: SANITATION AND SAFETY**

**NO: SS-06-02**

**TITLE: Pandemic/Epidemic Flu**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:  
June 12, 2009**

### **PURPOSE OF THIS CRITERIA/PROCEDURE -**

Children attending schools in Georgia should be assured of a healthy environment any time they are on school property. Proper supplies for good personal hygiene should be provided to limit the spread of bacteria and viruses. Appropriate cleaning supplies should be available and used properly to control and kill these biological agents. The school nutrition program should have emergency readiness guidelines in place that coordinate with the plan for the rest of the school and with the local health department and other local authorities, should a pandemic/epidemic flu or any emergency situation occur.

Research suggests that currently circulating strains of avian flu viruses are becoming more capable of causing disease in animals than were earlier avian flu viruses. The avian influenza A virus that emerged in Asia in 2003 continues to evolve and may adapt so that other mammals may be susceptible to infection as well. Many epidemiologists believe that it is only a matter of time before the avian flu virus mutates with human flu virus to cause a pandemic. (See Reference 1)

Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. (See Reference 2)

When pandemic/epidemic flu becomes apparent, it will probably be learned through media coverage before illness occurs in a particular area. This early warning will give time to do last minute preparations in accordance with these recommendations and local emergency procedures.

The school nutrition manager and staff are well trained in food safety and are assets to the implementation of a school's emergency plan. Each school has at least one nutrition staff member, usually the manager, who has successfully completed food safety certification training and an exam. This exam is nationally recognized and is usually the ServSafe exam administered by the National Restaurant Association.

While there are similar guidelines in any emergency plan for schools, there are unique measures that should be taken in the event of pandemic/epidemic flu. Few emergencies will have as widespread effects as will pandemic/epidemic flu, both inside and outside the school.

## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS –**

**Pandemic:** An outbreak of a disease in many countries at the same time. A pandemic of influenza—or flu—occurs when a new flu virus rapidly spreads from country to country around the world. The swift spread of a pandemic flu happens because people are not immune to the new flu virus, and an effective vaccine would take months to develop.

**Epidemic:** Spreading rapidly and extensively by infection and affecting many individuals in an area or a population at the same time.

**Avian Flu:** Also called bird flu, avian flu is a flu-like virus that primarily is found in birds, but has infected several humans in other countries. The fear is that the avian flu virus will mix with human flu viruses and produce a new type of flu to which humans have no immunity. This new virus could cause a pandemic flu and affect many countries.

**Swine Flu:** A respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person.

# CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES –

## Before the pandemic or epidemic occurs

1. Maintain a list of all staff members with home addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, emergency contact information and update frequently.
2. Maintain a written record of all persons who have keys and access to kitchen and cafeteria entrances, walk-in coolers/freezers and dry storage areas.
3. Determine if vendors have a pandemic or emergency plan for continuity or recovery of supply deliveries when an emergency occurs that reduces the workforce. If they do not have a plan, encourage them to do so.
4. Prevention is the most important measure to stop anyone from getting a contagious illness. For viruses like the flu, hand-washing is the number one preventive measure. Preparation in schools for pandemic/epidemic flu or any contagious illness should include the provision of proper supplies in restrooms and teaching students the importance of hand-washing at all grade levels. Students should also be taught the importance of coughing and sneezing into their upper sleeve to avoid spreading bacteria and viruses. These measures are important for anyone in a school, but are even more important for those eating meals in school cafeterias. Good personal hygiene will help prevent the transfer of viruses from hand to mouth as food is consumed.
5. For your own health as well as others, be aware of the symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an influenza-like illness as having the following symptoms:
  - A fever of 101.5°F or higher; and
  - One of the following – cough, sore throat, headache and/or muscle ache (See Reference 3)
  - Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may accompany the above symptoms.
6. Once the flu gets to an area, schools will begin to see a gradual increase in absenteeism. At some point, predetermined by the school's emergency plan, parents will be notified of the increased absenteeism. When this occurs, there will probably be an immediate further increase in absenteeism because of the fear of being exposed to the flu. This alone will decrease the number of meals that need to be prepared. A daily update on student attendance will help the school nutrition manager estimate the amount of food preparation needed for each day.

7. Some preparations need to be done in advance, such as:
- a. Vendors may have to close due to staff shortages. A list of back-up vendors and contact information should be updated regularly.
  - b. Maintain at least a five-day supply of food products. These foods should include at least a two-day supply of products that can be easily served in bag lunches. In the event of pandemic/epidemic flu, a regular five-day supply will probably be enough for more than five days because of student absenteeism.
  - c. There may be staff shortages in school nutrition. Plan to limit menu items and possibly provide bag lunches if necessary or if it will make the workload easier. Maintain enough disposable plates, cups, utensils, etc. for five days use in case staff shortages make it difficult to operate the dish machine.
  - d. Carefully maintain proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures and perform routine maintenance on equipment. Proper cleaning and sanitizing is always necessary, but it takes on increased importance when there is an illness outbreak. Dishwashing machines must be maintained to operate according to the data plate on the front of the machine.
  - e. Update employee health guidelines to address the need for excluding employees from the facility should symptoms of sore throat with fever, vomiting and or diarrhea occur. In addition, a required condition for reinstatement during a flu pandemic/epidemic must be written documentation from a health practitioner that the person is free of the flu causing virus.
  - f. Prevention is of primary importance. Therefore, hand washing takes on increased significance. There are no hand sinks available in most school cafeteria dining areas. The second choice for hand sanitizing is hand sanitizer. Maintain a supply of hand sanitizer that will be enough for treating the average number of students coming to a cafeteria for five days. (Note: Even though some cafeterias may have an available hand sink for student hand washing, hand sanitizer is a good additional preventive measure.)
  - g. The most effective sanitizer for killing viruses is chlorine bleach. Maintain a supply of chlorine bleach for sanitizing cafeteria tables, seats, door knobs, etc. (1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon water). Note that school nutrition only purchases chlorine bleach and other supplies for use by school nutrition. Replace chlorine bleach with new product at least once each year as the strength may weaken over time. i.e., use the old and replace with new. If the school does not want to use chlorine bleach, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant or a sanitizer that is EPA-registered and labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses may be substituted. Use the disinfectant or sanitizer according to the manufacturer's instructions.
  - h. Train all staff to be aware of flu symptoms and what the school's emergency preparedness plan includes.

8. If delivery of milk becomes a problem, contact the state School Nutrition Program for alternate solutions, as indicated in 7 CFR 210.10(m)(2).
9. All students should be required to apply hand sanitizer to his/her hands upon entering the cafeteria. It is suggested that a school nutrition employee or teacher stand at the entrance of the cafeteria to ensure that each student applies hand sanitizer properly.
10. Self-service salad bars and buffets should be discontinued during a flu outbreak. Viruses do not multiply in food, but it only takes a very small number to make someone ill. If a student who is ill coughs, rubs his nose and then touches food or contaminates the food in another way, the next person to choose the same food item will be infected.
11. At some point students who are showing no symptoms may be quarantined in classrooms, possibly until they can be taken home. Bag lunches will probably be the best solution to feed these students. Sanitize the cart that is used to carry the bag lunches to each classroom with a chlorine bleach solution at least daily (1/4 cup chlorine bleach per gallon of water) and allow to air dry (another product may be used as stated in 7. g. above if chlorine bleach is not purchased). Provide large garbage cans outside the occupied classrooms according to the number of children and amount of waste materials. Custodians should promptly tie garbage bags and dispose of them as soon as possible after the meal period.
12. Custodians should be provided with chlorine bleach by the building administrator or maintenance department to sanitize desks, classroom doorknobs and handrails daily and properly sanitize an area should vomiting occur. Procedures for sanitizing an area after someone vomits are provided in the Criteria and Procedures for Disinfection of Surfaces. If the cafeteria and/or other floor areas are carpeted, a steam cleaner is the best alternative to using chlorine bleach. If chlorine bleach is not preferred for sanitizing surfaces such as desktops and doorknobs due to the possibility of staining carpets, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant or other EPA-registered sanitizer labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses may be substituted.

## **While a school is closed:**

1. Once the absenteeism rate reaches a certain point predetermined by a school's emergency plan and/or by the local health authority, a school may need to be closed. Maintain contact with school administration to know the status of the situation and when the school will be reopened. Under some circumstances, as in swine flu (H1N1), CDC guidance states that a school should close immediately even if only one student has a suspected or confirmed case. Closure is recommended for up to 14 days.
2. There may be a need for outside feeding programs similar to seamless summer nutrition programs if the school, in agreement with local emergency authorities, thinks it is appropriate. If a school is not already approved for a seamless summer nutrition program, contact the state School Nutrition Program for approval. If any of the guidelines need to be altered due to the situation, contact the state School Nutrition Program to consult with USDA for a waiver. In an emergency situation the state School Nutrition Program will make it a priority to gain approvals and waivers as quickly as possible. Many schools have the proper insulated equipment to transport foods, especially if they have summer programs or cater food. If a school doesn't have the necessary equipment to maintain proper temperatures, the equipment can be possibly borrowed from local caterers or non-potentially hazardous foods can be provided in bag lunches. Note that local caterers will probably have reduced business during a time of pandemic flu since one of the recommendations to the public is to stay home and not participate in large gatherings.
3. If outside feeding is not needed or there are not enough staff members to operate such a program and it appears that the school will be closed for more than a week, consider discarding refrigerated potentially hazardous foods that have been prepared on-site or commercially prepared and opened. In lieu of discarding, you may consider wrapping the food products securely, dating properly and freezing. Fresh produce and milk should never be frozen. Discard any food that has a sell-by/use-by/expiration date within the projected length of closure time period. Always inventory and record types and amounts of food products that are discarded on production records so that costs are reflected in the SNO state reports. Contact vendors to suspend deliveries until further notice.
4. Depending on circumstances and staff availability, continue monitoring temperatures of refrigerated equipment daily. Keep in mind that your personal safety and protection are most important. Do not worry about monitoring equipment if instructions have been given to not come back to the school premises or for everyone to stay at home.
5. In the event that a school has an "immediate closing" with only one day or less notification, do as much as you can to secure food products as described in this paper, but above all else, secure facilities as you would at the end of any day and leave the premises. Your health is most important. It is recommended that managers take contact information with them so that any necessary phone calls to vendors, etc. can be done from another location.

## **Re-opening a school:**

1. Contact all employees to find out their health status and availability to come back to work. A small staff may mean that a smaller menu will need to be served (see 7. c. under “Before the pandemic or epidemic occurs”.)
2. Contact all vendors to notify them of when the school plans to re-open and to find out when they can make deliveries.
3. All food contact surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized unless they were completely wrapped with plastic wrap or other secure material to prevent contamination.
4. Check all food products and discard when any of the following is found:
  - a. Signs of being out of temperature: excess ice crystals are a sign of refreezing, unusual odors and coloration, etc.
  - b. Signs of vandalism and tampering.
  - c. Food products have expired use-by/sell-by/expiration dates.
5. In the event of vandalism and tampering of food products or any area of the school kitchen and cafeteria, notify the school principal and the police.
6. If the school has been closed for more than two weeks and/or there is any evidence of food temperature abuse, vandalism, facility damage or pest infestation, contact the local health department to assist in evaluation of food products and other food safety/sanitation concerns.

## **Resources and References:**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Avian Influenza: Current Situation <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/outbreaks/current.htm#assess>. Accessed January 22, 2007.
2. Contra Costa Health Services. Influenza Case Definition. Contra Costa County, California, USA. [http://www.cchealth.org/topics/pandemic\\_flu/school\\_action\\_kit/case\\_definition.pdf](http://www.cchealth.org/topics/pandemic_flu/school_action_kit/case_definition.pdf) Accessed January 23, 2007.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Swine Influenza and You. [http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/swineflu\\_you.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/swineflu_you.htm). Accessed April 28, 2009.

## **AUTHORITY – FEDERAL**

Chapter 7, Code of Federal Regulation Parts 210.9(b)(14), 210.13(a)&(c), 210.19(e).

## **AUTHORITY – STATE**

Georgia Department of Human Resources Rule 290-5-14-.10, Compliance Procedures.