



Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

Pandemic and Disaster Response Policy

POLICY

ECVO believes in maintaining and sustaining the health of our employees physically and emotionally during a pandemic outbreak. The following policy and procedures are in place to outline the specific steps the ECVO will take to safeguard employees' health and well-being during a flu pandemic while ensuring ECVO's ability to maintain essential operations and continue providing essential services to our members. In addition, it provides guidance on how we intend to respond to specific operational and human resource issues in the event of a pandemic.

In the event of a pandemic or disaster, ECVO will follow any applicable legislation and guidance from health authorities first and will then provide direction on to respond to this type of emergency. *(See links under Supporting Documents, refer to page 5 of the policy).*

NOTE: This should be adopted to apply to any disaster.

DEFINITIONS

What is Influenza?

Influenza is caused by a flu virus which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). It usually starts suddenly and may include these symptoms: fever, muscle pain and weakness, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhea and vomiting (especially in children).

Influenza is transmitted from person to person through direct contact primarily when people who are infected cough or sneeze and droplets come into contact with the eyes, nose or mouth of another person. Also, influenza is indirectly transmitted when people touch contaminated hands, surfaces or objects and then touch their face. The virus can survive on nonporous surfaces such as doorknobs, countertops or toys for up to 48 hours. People who become infected with influenza are able to transmit the virus for 24 hours before symptoms appear and for up to five days after symptoms appear. Children can be infectious for up to seven days after symptoms appear.

What is a Pandemic?

Human pandemic influenza is a global outbreak of influenza that when a new influenza virus emerges and spreads worldwide. A Pandemic can take place in any season, not just winter. Pandemic influenza results from the emergence of a new human influenza virus to which most humans do not have immunity. Viruses that have caused past pandemics typically originate from animal influenza viruses. It is usually associated with a higher severity of illness and, consequently, a higher risk of death.



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What makes a Pandemic different from the typical flu?

The following illustrates the differences between pandemic influenza and typical seasonal influenza.

| Pandemic Influenza | Typical Seasonal Flu |
|--|--|
| Comes from a novel virus to which no one, or few people, have any immunity | Circulating viruses slightly mutate year to year |
| Attack rate may be as high as 30% of population | Attack rate approximately 10% of population |
| Patients are sicker for a longer period time | Illness usually lasts 1 to 2 weeks |
| Limited or no vaccine availability | Vaccine available prior to illness in population |
| May be resistant to some antivirals | Several antiviral medications are available |
| Excess mortality (3 to 7 times normal rate) | Normal flu mortality – 36,000/year in U.S. |
| Patients may present with primary viral pneumonia | Pneumonia is usually a later complication |
| May be severe in all ages | Severe in the very old and the very young |
| Can occur at any time of the year | Seasonal – occurs in the winter |
| May have more than one wave of illness | Usually just one wave of illness |
| Spreads rapidly throughout the world | |

The World Health Organization (“WHO”)

The WHO monitors the status of influenza around the world and declares pandemic alert phases based on the number of cases and mode of the transmission of illness. At a provincial level, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Commission for Emergency Management will be jointly responsible. Also, each local municipality has an emergency plan and may activate their plan in response to a pandemic emergency to coordinate the municipal support to the community.

How might our work environment be impacted?

Pandemic influenza could strike at any time. If the pandemic influenza spreads to ECVO, a cumulative absentee rate of up to or more than 25-30% of employees is expected for up to 6-9 months, on a rolling basis. This number includes sick employees, employees who are caring for sick family members and employees who do not come to work out of fear of becoming ill. In addition, there may be a significant need for social distancing (a reduction of the number of persons concentrated in the workplace), necessitating that employees complete production but do not report to the workplace.

How long does it last?

In the event that a pandemic is declared, we can expect a pandemic wave to last 8-12 weeks (there may be more than one “wave”). An individual can be sick from 5-8 days. Most people who get the flu recover within 1-2 weeks and do not require medical treatment.



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RISK PHASES

Public Health tends to define pandemics based on phases, and ECVO has adopted this into our procedures as follows:

Phase 1: Low Risk

- This phase may include a declaration of a Global Public Health Emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO)
- There may or may not be confirmed cases within Canada
- This phase includes planning efforts that focus on preventative measures to stop the spread of illness

Phase 2: Low - Medium Risk

- Continuation of Phase 1 requirements plus additional requirements
- WHO may declare a Global Pandemic
- There are confirmed cases in Alberta

Phase 3: High Risk

Any or all of the following:

- There are confirmed cases within Edmonton
- Continuation of phase 1 and 2 requirements
- WHO has declared a Global Pandemic
- Illness is widespread and governments and health officials are actively working to curtail the spread of the contagious illness

Phase 4: Post-Pandemic

- WHO will declare an end to the Global Pandemic
- Influenza activity will have returned to levels normally seen for seasonal influenza
- Cases may continue to occur
- It will remain important for people to continue to take prudent steps to protect themselves. Actions to generally reduce risks of influenza infection, such as thorough use of vaccines and hand and respiratory hygiene, will also reduce the risks from infection specifically.

GUIDELINES

Management

- Obtain and maintain a daily update regarding the number of employees who have been diagnosed with the influenza pandemic
- Maintain ongoing contact with relevant, qualified health professionals, such as the Local Health Officer or Public Health and share important information with staff; management will assess and determine the most appropriate means of communication and content to be shared with employees any other relevant individuals and/or services
- Timely team and staff meetings to occur to review individual and member's needs, site specific procedures and employee concerns



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- Encourage employees to report symptoms associated with the influenza pandemic and that they should seek advice from their health care provider regarding such
- Assess staffing resources and adjust work schedule accordingly to ensure quality supports, as well as health and safety of employees
- Assess the need to close programs and service offerings; members will be notified of current situation by relevant program staff or designate
- Provide necessary equipment and resources in pandemic procedures to reduce the spread of infection for employees; evaluate and update as required
 - Equipment may include masks, gloves, antiseptic hand wash, cleaning supplies and any other equipment recommended by qualified health professionals
 - Establish cleaning practices and infection control of work location, in consultation with qualified health professionals
- Provide training both general and site-specific on pandemic prevention, universal precautions, communicable diseases and hazard identification
- Responses used by the Local Health Officer during a pandemic influenza event can vary, but may include isolation and quarantine orders and social distancing measures
- ECVO will also make decisions in relation to the severity of the situation involving employees and the ability of the organization to continue to operate at full or a reduced capacity
- These guidelines and procedures do not limit the Executive Director or the Board to make operational decisions as deemed necessary

Employees

- Comply with any requirements, procedures and/or protocols at all times and seek clarification as required
- Employees are expected to work their scheduled shifts unless otherwise directed by the Executive Director
- If there are extenuating and/or changed circumstances relating to an employee's health (asthma, pregnancy, illness, etc.) they must inform the Executive Director immediately (a medical note may be requested when staff are unable to work)
- Employees may be required to work additional hours during an influenza pandemic and while every effort will be made to comply with the *Alberta Employment Standards Act (ESA)* related to hours free from work/hours of work, it may be necessary to rely on the exception in the ESA for emergency and exceptional circumstances
- Participate in mandatory training and ongoing education as determined by ECVO
- Report any unsafe acts, hazards, equipment shortages and/or problems or any unsafe conditions immediately to the Executive Director
- Report any influenza pandemic symptoms to the Executive Director immediately and participate in procedures as determined by the Executive Director
- Stay home from work if sick and seek necessary medical attention
- Provide the Executive Director with daily reports

Post-Pandemic

The following will be taken into consideration following influenza pandemic:

- Communication and sharing of information with employees



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- Continued monitoring of pandemic activity and of any potential after-effects of the pandemic
- Evaluation of pandemic response, plan and procedures; revisions to be incorporated as necessary
- Provide counselling services to employees as required

Contact List for Emergencies

Gemma Dunn, Executive Director

Phone: (780) 809-0886

Email: gemma@ecvo.ca

In the event the Executive Director is not available, the second point of emergency contact is as follow:

Greg Bounds, Board Chair

Email: gregorybounds@gmail.com

Supporting Documents

- Pandemic and Disaster Response Procedures
- Non-Profit Preparedness Checklist
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/know-facts-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=698095C2869CC-F664-6E12-2ADF3D4DC0E40808>
- <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>
- <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/link/index.html>
- <https://www.alberta.ca/employment-standards.aspx>
- <https://www.alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx>



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Pandemic and Disaster Response Procedures

ECVO Membership

Should regular work or work related to ECVO programming need to change due to a pandemic, employees who are responsible for these programs will communicate by telephone or e-mail to all members the direction ECVO is taking prior to the next programming day in order to prevent or decrease the risk of spreading the pandemic flu.

Messages that employees are asked to communicate to members will be standardized by the Executive Director to ensure accuracy and to ensure ECVO provides information within the realm of their capability.

ECVO will provide standardized resource information to connect our members to health providers in order to ensure they receive the most informed information in relation to pandemic illness (e.g., Health Link, 811).

Business Travel

ECVO makes all reasonable efforts to eliminate the need for travel by taking advantage of technology that allows us to communicate or otherwise operate electronically. Generally, in the event of an influenza pandemic, travel on ECVO's behalf is immediately suspended and limited to a select group of essential personnel who have obtained required travel authorizations from the Executive Director and, if necessary, outside authorities.

Temporary Work Arrangements

ECVO will determine at various stages during a pandemic outbreak whether or not alternative work arrangements are necessary to support both the organization, its employees and the community overall.

Modified Work Week

In order to protect employees from increased risk of transmission, ECVO may introduce a modified work week to employees where ECVO reduces the number of employees in the office at any given time. One example may include rotating between working in the office and working from a remote location. These decisions will be determined based on the circumstances and direction from the Local Health Officer.

Telecommuting

Should ECVO decide to have employees work from home, a list will be compiled of the type of work they will be doing from home. In addition, an employee will be assigned to track the hours they are working from home. Employees who work from home will be expected to be available during normal business hours and this includes having appropriate childcare for any children at home. ECVO will ensure that remote work locations are equipped with the necessary equipment for off-site telecommuting operations.

An employee who becomes ill and/or is unable to perform the determined work will have a successor assigned to complete this work.



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Infection Control Measures

ECVO takes a number of steps to minimize exposure to and spread of infection in the workplace, which is an ideal site for contagion because of workers' close proximity to one another. As appropriate, ECVO recommends measures that employees can take to protect themselves outside the workplace and encourages all workers to discuss their specific needs with a family physician or other appropriate health or wellness professional.

Ill Employees

ECVO expects employees who contract the flu or have been exposed to infected family members or others with whom employees have been in contact to stay home and seek medical attention as necessary and appropriate. ECVO expects such workers to notify the Executive Director as soon as possible of exposure or illness.

At our discretion or the direction of outside authorities, we can require the isolation and quarantine of any infected employee who come to work despite exposure or need for medical attention.

Employee Sick Leave and Pay / Family Medical Leave

Employees who are sick and demonstrating pandemic flu symptoms at work will be sent home, and their accrued Casual Illness days will be applied to the absence. Employees may be asked to produce a doctor's note for an illness over five working days (this does not include weekends). In the event that Doctors are not able to see patients, ECVO can decide to waive producing a doctor's note. Employees will ensure they do not return to work until they are symptom free.

Sick employees must notify the Executive Director as soon as possible (or no later than 24 hours after determining) they have the pandemic flu. See Quarantine for further information.

Employees needing to care for sick family members are to use their accrued Casual Illness days or their vacation days according to policy. If the employee has no accrued illness or vacation days, ECVO will comply with all applicable *Alberta Employment Standards* legislation for job-protected leave.

Quarantine

During a pandemic outbreak, Local Health Officers may advise the public or ECVO may choose to quarantine individuals who have come in contact with another person who has the pandemic influenza or as a general precautionary measure within social distancing.

ECVO will follow the direction given by the Local Health Authority in regard to quarantine and direct employees accordingly. This may include, but is not limited to, remaining away from the workplace for a certain period of days that would coincide with the incubation period.

In the event an employee has come into contact with someone who has been confirmed to have the pandemic influenza and ECVO has implemented a quarantine, the employee will be given the choice to take accrued Casual Illness days and then vacation leave during the quarantine period or work from home if they have access to appropriate office equipment (e.g. laptop, access to emails, etc.).

Employees who choose to work from home will be expected to be available during normal business hours during the quarantine period and this includes having appropriate childcare for any children at home.



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Employees will be required to continue to do as much work related to their current job description without social contact and otherwise may be assigned other ECVO related work.

Employees may be required to use accrued Casual Illness days in the event of an office closure due to a quarantine related to a precautionary measure. If the employee has no accrued illness days, ECVO will comply with all applicable *Alberta Employment Standards* legislation for job-protected leave.

During the quarantine period, the Executive Director will contact the employee every second day to monitor the employee's health condition. At the end of the determined quarantine period, if the employee is symptom free, the employee must contact the Executive Director to inform them of their intention to return to work.

In the event of pandemic influenza, ECVO allows employees to use their accrued paid Casual Illness Days. If the employee has no accrued illness days, ECVO will comply with all applicable *Alberta Employment Standards* legislation for job-protected leave.

Returning to Work

In the event ECVO sends all employees home to work during the pandemic, those employees who are working will be required to check on-line daily for updates on when they will need to return to work.

Employees who are taking paid or unpaid leave are not required to check on-line for a return to work update; they will be contact by telephone and/or email by the Executive Director when it is time to return to work.

Prior to employees returning to their workplace, the office will be cleaned in accordance with local health guidelines.