

Pandemic Flu: The College Response

In 2006, when the threat of avian flu was high, the U.S. government created the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan. Some of the lessons learned from that experience and that document are applicable to today's college campuses, as we face the 2009 public health emergency—and potential pandemic—associated with swine flu.

So, in the event of an outbreak...

- Colleges and universities need to consider the potential impact of a pandemic on campus and residence hall closure, including contingency plans for students who depend on student housing and campus food service.
- Colleges and universities must also address continuity of instruction as part of their continuity planning.
- Institutions are encouraged to review existing emergency response plans consistent with guidance provided by the Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools "Emergency Response and Crisis Management Guide."

CDC Podcast: Swine Flu

Listen to Dr. Joe Bresee, with the CDC Influenza Division, describe swine flu - its signs and symptoms, how it's transmitted, medicines to treat it, steps people can take to protect themselves from it, and what people should do if they become ill – during this CDC podcast. It may be a great way for students to learn more about the disease, too.

Podcast at: www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11226.

Quick Definitions

Epidemic — An outbreak of a contagious disease that spreads rapidly and widely.

Pandemic — An epidemic over a wide geographic area affecting a large percentage of the population.

- Since up to 40% of the U.S. work force could be off the job for two weeks in a severe pandemic, businesses and organizations are asked to consider now how they would continue to run under such conditions.
- Employers are encouraged to set non-punitive sick-leave policies to keep infected people home while also considering work at home and alternate office options.
- Regular office cleaning, keeping co-workers at least 3 feet apart and not shaking hands are also advised.
- A flu pandemic could roll through the country, causing 6-8 weeks of active infection per community.
- Local communities will need to address medical and nonmedical impacts because the federal government won't be able to offer the kind of aid expected after one-time disasters such as hurricanes.
- The worst-case scenario is that there could be up to 2 million deaths in the U.S.

To read more about the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan, go to www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/federal/strategyimplementationplan.html.

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