


LINCOLN COUNTY
PANDEMIC INFLUENZA RESPONSE PLAN
June 2019

APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION

LCHD Pandemic Influenza Response Plan


This document is hereby approved for implementation and supersedes all previous editions.

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Signature Date

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 6-12-19
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Record of Changes

Date	Revisions Made	Approved by:	Distribution Date
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Introduction: Severe influenza pandemics represent one of the greatest potential threats to the public's health. Pandemics are distinct from seasonal influenza epidemics that happen nearly every year. Seasonal influenza epidemics are caused by influenza viruses that circulate around the world. Over time, people develop some degree of immunity to these viruses and vaccines are developed annually to protect people from serious illness. Pandemic influenza refers to a worldwide epidemic due to a new, dramatically different strain of influenza virus. A pandemic virus strain can spread rapidly from person to person and, if severe, can cause high levels of disease and death around the world. Additionally new vaccines must be developed and therefore are not likely to be available for months, during which time many people could become infected and seriously ill.

Purpose: The Lincoln County Pandemic Influenza Response Plan provides guidance to the health and medical community and other partners in health regarding detection, response and recovery from an influenza pandemic. This is a function specific plan that addresses pandemic influenza outbreak or the threat of outbreak and supports Lincoln County's comprehensive emergency plans. The plan is prepared with the knowledge that situations will arise that is more or less significant than planned for. Some situations may be unexpected and are not address in this plan.

This plan strives to:

- Define preparedness activities that should be undertaken before a pandemic occurs that will enhance the effectiveness of response measures.
- Describe the coordination, roles and decision making structure that will incorporate Lincoln County Public Health, the health care system in Lincoln County, other local agencies and state and federal agencies during a pandemic.
- During an influenza pandemic, LCHD and local partners in health will use the plan to achieve the following goals:
 - Limit the number of illnesses and deaths
 - Immunize and/or treat as many individuals as possible
 - Preserve continuity of essential government functions
 - Minimize social disruption and economic losses
- The plan will be coordinated with the Lincoln County Emergency Preparedness plans and activities and will be coordinated with the plans of state and federal partners.
- Address the unique challenges posed by a pandemic that may necessitate specific leadership decisions and response actions.

Pandemic Influenza

There are several characteristics of a pandemic influenza that differentiates it from other public health emergencies.

- It has the potential to suddenly cause illness in a very large number of people, who could easily overwhelm the health care system throughout the nation.
- A pandemic outbreak could also jeopardize essential community services by causing high levels of absenteeism in critical positions in every workforce.

- It is likely that vaccines against the new virus will not be available for six to eight months following the emergence of the virus.
- Basic services, such as health care, law enforcement, fire, emergency response, communications, transportation and utilities, could be disrupted during a pandemic.
- Finally, the pandemic, unlike many other emergency events, could last for several weeks, if not months.

Planning Assumptions

- An influenza pandemic will result in the rapid spread of the infection with outbreaks throughout the world. Communities across the state and the country may be impacted simultaneously.
- There will be a need for heightened global, national and local surveillance.
- Lincoln County will not be able to rely on local mutual aid resources. State or federal assistance to support local response efforts may be limited.
- Antiviral medications will be in short supply. Local supplies of antiviral medications may be prioritized by the Health Officer for use in hospitalized influenza patients, health care workers providing care for patients and other priority groups based on current national guidelines.
- A vaccine for the pandemic influenza strain will likely not be available for six to eight months following the emergence of a novel virus.
- As vaccine becomes available, it will be distributed and administered by LCHD based on current national guidelines.
- Insufficient supplies of vaccines and antiviral medicines will place greater emphasis on social distancing strategies and public education to control the spread of the disease in the county.
- The number of ill people requiring outpatient medical care and hospitalization could overwhelm the local health care system.
- Hospitals and clinics will have to modify their operational structure to respond to high patient volumes and maintain functionality of critical systems.
- The local health care system may have to respond to increased demands for service while the medical workforce experiences 25-35% absenteeism due to illness.
- Demand for inpatient beds and assisted ventilators will increase by 25% or more and prioritization criteria for access to limited services and resources may be needed.
- Emergency Medical Service responders will face extremely high call volumes for several weeks and may face 25-35% reduction in available staff.
- The number of fatalities experienced during the first few weeks of a pandemic could overwhelm the resources of Medical Examiner's Office, hospital morgues and funeral homes.
- The demand for home care and social services will increase dramatically.
- There could be significant disruption of public and privately owned critical infrastructure including transportation, commerce, utilities, public safety, agriculture and communications.
- Social distancing strategies aimed at reducing the spread of infections such as closing schools, community centers and other public gathering points or cancelling public events may be implemented during a pandemic.

- Some persons will be unable or unwilling to comply with isolation directives. For others, social distancing strategies may be less feasible (for example, homeless populations who live in congregate settings). It will be important to develop and disseminate strategies for infection control appropriate for these environments and populations.
- The general public, health care system, response agencies and elected leaders will need continuous updates on the status of the pandemic outbreak, impacts on critical services, the steps LCPH is taking to address the incident and steps response partners and the public can take to protect themselves.

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) Annex M, state authorities outline local, state, and federal health jurisdictions' responsibilities in a pandemic influenza event. The following table describes specific responsibilities and roles of LCHD employees during a pandemic influenza event.

Lincoln County Health Department

- Promote vaccination for disease prevention and conduct seasonal influenza vaccination clinics
- Conduct active surveillance for communicable disease with key surveillance partners
- Provide educational resources to community members
- Coordinate planning with other community partners monitor influenza levels in the community as directed by DPHHS's influenza reporting rules
- Educate the public, health care system partners, response partners, businesses, community-based organizations and elected leaders about influenza pandemics, expected impacts and consequences and preventive measures.
- Partner with local clinics and labs to quantify suspected and confirmed flu cases
- Monitor Health Alert Network (HAN) and CDC news releases for messages regarding influenza activity that identifies location, strains detected, and if any circulating strains are showing resistance to antivirals
- Communicate CDC and DPHHS surveillance findings and recommendations with key surveillance partners
- Work with local media members to disseminate infection control materials (cough etiquette, hand washing) to community members
- Review pandemic plans with local emergency response and healthcare partners to identify a situation-specific plan of action
- Depending on severity, work with local government officials and administration of care facilities to consider closures of schools, restricting visitation to residents or patients of care facilities, cancelling large community events, and other social distancing techniques
- Should civil unrest occur, work with local law enforcement regarding security of key infrastructure and educational campaigns for the populace

- Should the community's need for resources exceed local capabilities, PHEP funds may be used to a certain degree to acquire resources when in communication with DPHHS
- Should the community's need for resources greatly exceed local capabilities, contact Montana State level PHEP employees to request Strategic National Stockpile resources as directed in the LCHD EMC Plan

Responsibilities of other Entities in Lincoln County:

Healthcare Partners

- Participate in an organized response plan facilitated by LCHD to maximize the health care system's ability to provide medical care during a pandemic.
- Essential functions this group will address:
 - Direction and control – coordinate with the LCHD
 - Surveillance and detection – coordination with Lincoln County Communicable Disease Coordinator to develop enhanced local influenza surveillance activities.
 - Worker safety and infection control – share information with LCHD to enhance infection control plans to triage and isolate infectious patients and protect staff.
 - Triage and patient care – Share response plans that address medical surge capacity to sustain the health care delivery capabilities when routine systems are overwhelmed.
 - Continuity of operations – develop approaches on how healthcare providers can continue to operate with reduced work force due to illness.

Schools

- The local school superintendents will appoint a representative to sit on the Emergency Operations group. Schools may be closed for an extended period in response to a developing pandemic.
- School nurses represent a possible source of medical resource for surge during a pandemic.

Managers of Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources

- Critical resources include water purification facilities, waste disposal facilities, sewage plants and public safety facilities could be jeopardized.
- Managers of critical infrastructure and key resources should plan for staff shortages approaching 50 percent and assure that supply chains are as robust as possible.
- Key resources include financial and banking services and food and grocery suppliers. Managers of key resources should be sure that emergency plans support operations with a diminished work force and interrupted supply chains.

Medical Examiner's/Coroner's Office

- Lead mass fatality planning and response efforts.
- Coordinate with and support hospital regarding mass fatalities planning and response.

- Incorporate funeral home directors into planning efforts for pandemic response.
- Coordinate planning and development of victim assistance centers.

Concept of Operations

General Concepts:

- LCHD and all response partners will operate under the Incident Command System (ICS) as further defined by the Lincoln County Response Plan throughout the duration of the pandemic response.
- Activation of the Pandemic Influenza Response Plan will be made by the Health Officer in consultation with PHEP Coordinator and the City-County Board of Health for Lincoln County based on the WHO Pandemic Influenza Phases.
- Response actions will emphasize the spread of infection and provide frequent communication and education to the public about the pandemic, the public health response and steps the public can take to reduce the risks of infection.

Direction and Control: LCHD is the lead agency in coordinating the local health and medical response to a pandemic with local, state and federal agencies and officials. During Pandemic Phase, LCHD will activate an ICS and incident command post to coordinate the county-wide public health and medical response during a pandemic. These activities are provided in depth in Lincoln County's Emergency Operation Plans.

Vaccine and Antiviral Mediations: Vaccine serves as the most effective preventative strategy against outbreaks of influenza, including pandemics. However, dissemination of an effective influenza vaccine during a pandemic faces several challenges:

- A pandemic strain could be detected at any time and production of a vaccine could take six to eight months after the virus first emerges.
- The target population for vaccination will ultimately include the entire United States population.
- It is expected that demand for vaccine will initially outstrip supply and administration of limited vaccine will need to be prioritized based on national guidelines and in consultation with the MT DPHHS.
- Antiviral medications may be useful for controlling and preventing influenza prior to the availability of vaccines, however, there is a limited supply of antiviral drugs effective against pandemic strains.

Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions: For more detail see Lincoln County Health Department's Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention Plan

Isolation and Quarantine:

- During all phases of a pandemic, person's ill with influenza will be directed to remain in isolation in health care settings or at home, to the extent possible.
- Hospitals will implement isolation protocols for all patients suspected of being infected with pandemic influenza.
- Once person-to-person transmission is established locally, quarantine of individuals exposed to influenza cases will be of limited value in preventing further spread of the disease.
- Quarantine of contacts of influenza cases may be beneficial during the earliest phases of a pandemic and in response to an influenza virus that has not achieved the ability to spread easily from person-to-person.

Social Distancing: Social distancing strategies are non-medical measures intended to reduce the spread of disease from person-to-person by discouraging or preventing people from coming in close contact with each other.

- These strategies could include:
 - closing public and private schools,
 - minimizing social interactions at colleges and libraries,
 - closing non-essential government functions,
 - implementing emergency staffing plans for the public and private sector including increasing telecommuting, flex scheduling and other options and
 - closing public gathering places including stadiums, theaters, churches, community centers and other facilities.
- Implementation of social distancing strategies in Lincoln County may create social disruption and significant long-term economic impacts. It is unknown how the public will respond to these measures. Decisions will be made jointly and concurrently by the health officer and the BOH regarding social distancing.
- The health officer will review social distancing strategies and current epidemiology and coordinate with leadership of towns in Lincoln County regarding social distancing actions that should be implemented to limit the spread of the disease.
- The health officer will also consult with local school superintendents and school presidents regarding the closing of all public and private schools and minimizing social interactions at colleges, universities and libraries in Lincoln County.
- If social distancing strategies are initiated, the health officer will monitor the effectiveness of social distancing in controlling the spread of disease and will advise appropriate decision makers when social distancing strategies should be relaxed or ended.

Public Health Services: During a pandemic, LCHD may suspend routine department operations to provide staff for flu clinics, triage centers and telephone triage services. The health officer or Public Health Manager will assess the need to reprioritize department functions and will direct the mobilization of staff to meet emerging needs of the pandemic.

Recovery: Recovery from an influenza pandemic will begin when it is determined that adequate supplies, resources and response system capacity exists to manage ongoing activities without continued assistance from pandemic response systems.

- In consultation with the healthcare providers and local elected leaders, the health officer will recommend specific actions to be taken to return the health care system and government functions to pre-event status.
- LCHD will assess the impact of the pandemic on the community's health as measured by morbidity and mortality and report findings to all response partners.
- Preparedness program will conduct an after action evaluation of the pandemic response. The evaluation will include recommendations for amendments to this plan.

