

## **A CHECK LIST TO HELP YOU PREPARE AND RESPOND TO A PANDEMIC FLU OUTBREAK**

Summarized checklist developed by the federal government that describes the action steps that you can take now to prepare for a pandemic flu. Keep in mind that many strategies take time to implement.

- ✓ Determine the possible impact of a pandemic on your organization's regular activities and services. Taking into account high rates of absenteeism or mandatory closings, consider circumstances that may require you to increase, decrease, or shift the services your organization delivers.
- ✓ Identify your organization's essential functions and the individuals who perform them. Cross-train staff and volunteers in other jobs so that if someone is ill, others are able to carry on the work.
- ✓ Plan accordingly for interruptions of essential governmental services like sanitation, water, power, and transportation, or disruptions to the food supply. For example, employees and volunteers might develop back-up plans for car pools in case mass transit is interrupted.
- ✓ Update sick leave and family medical leave policies so that staffers will not be penalized for personal illness or for caring for sick family members during a pandemic. Volunteers and employees should remain home until they are well.
- ✓ Determine whether your volunteers and staff have "cross over skills" like nursing or mental health counseling that could be used during a health crisis, and make the information known to local health authorities. Your local health department may already be compiling rosters of individuals in the community that can be called on to help during a health emergency.
- ✓ Evaluate your organization's activities and services that involve close person-to-person contact, including child care, elder care, and religious rites, especially those that involve hand-holding or sharing food or drink from common dishes or glasses. Establish policies to modify these activities to prevent the spread of pandemic flu and communicate them to your staff, volunteers and people you serve.
- ✓ Determine the supplies needed to promote respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, like tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizer products, and develop a plan for how to obtain them.
- ✓ Share information about your pandemic preparedness and response with volunteers, staff, congregants, and the people you serve. You may consider activating phone chains, distributing flyers and sending mass emails to get your message out. During times of anxiety, people turn to those they trust, so clear and frequent communication is essential.
- ✓ Ensure that what you communicate about pandemic preparedness is appropriate for the cultures, languages, and reading levels of those you serve. Identify those with special needs and be sure to include their needs in your preparedness and response planning.

## Common Sense Precautions to Prevent the Spread of Flu

All flu, including pandemic flu, is caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It is generally spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

An effective vaccination against the pandemic flu—when it is available—will be the best way to prevent the disease.

To fight the annual flu, members of high-risk groups should get a flu shot. Even those who are not in the high-risk categories should get a flu shot if enough vaccine is available, especially healthcare workers.

The following simple, common sense precautions can also help. Recommended by the CDC, they should be communicated to your employees, volunteers, and those you serve.

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** If you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too.
- **Stay home when you're sick or have flu symptoms.** Get plenty of rest and check with your doctor.
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.** If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you and others against germs. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand rubs or gel sanitizers.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs are often spread to your system when you touch something that is contaminated with germs and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods. Avoid smoking, which may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.

Info taken from "Trust for America's Health"