

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Aim

The aim of this plan is to provide a coordinated structure to ensure an integrated and comprehensive health communications system is established in the event of an influenza pandemic.

2. Concept

The Communications Plan will involve the communications staff of the Health Department and will coordinate with other stakeholders including those at municipal, regional and provincial levels. Phases of response (corresponding with the World Health Organization's (WHO) six phases of notification, see Annex C) are outlined in the Plan. The Health Department will be responsible for leading the health communications effort through all phases. For Phase 6 – Pandemic period (in North America) – communications efforts will be directed from the Health Operations Centre (HOC).

3. Responsibility

The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) has overall responsibility for the Health Department Communications Plan at all phases of the Pandemic Response. Responsibility for the implementation of this plan at these levels is that of the Health Department's Manager of Community and Resource Development, who will be the Communications Team Leader under the direction of the MOH.

4. Scope

The Communications Plan will consist of the following components:

- Public Information/Directives/Inquiry
- Media Relations
- Staff Information
- Information for the Health Care Community
- Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards)
- Rumour Control

5. Key Messages

Key messages will be determined in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

- Durham Region has an ongoing pandemic plan developed in accordance with The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC).

- Pandemics may occur in waves and may increase and decrease at different times in different geographical regions.
- The level of activity separated into Phases 1 to 6, as per the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Make sure to receive the current influenza vaccine; it may not protect against the pandemic strain, but will decrease the burden on health care resources and the risk of illness with other strains.
- Antiviral agents are available on a priority basis for treatment and potentially prophylaxis of influenza.
- Antibiotics are not useful in the treatment of influenza unless a secondary bacterial infection has occurred.
- When a pandemic influenza vaccine is available, it will be made available to the public on a priority basis determined by PHAC and the Province.
- If you are eligible for pneumonia vaccine, ensure you receive it, as the most common complication of influenza is bacterial pneumonia, which can be life-threatening (contact your family doctor).
- Practice good hygiene at all times:
 - a. If you are sick, stay home and avoid public meetings and group gatherings
 - b. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
 - c. Wash hands frequently
- Prepare personal and home emergency plans, and include a supply of food, water, medications and other necessities.

At any given time, the following components may overlap to achieve the most appropriate method for dissemination of information to the public.

Phase	Description	Response/Action
Phase 1	Interpandemic period No new virus in humans.	<p>Public Information/Directives/Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State "Phase 1" on pandemic Web page. <li>• Develop and post a scalable surveillance Web page, and with CIS, develop technology to implement a news flash horizontal scrolling banner. <li>• Distribute fact sheets regarding infection control, hand washing, influenza (including avian influenza), influenza vaccine, and pandemic information throughout the Region, including media, municipalities, health care community, workplaces and boards of education. <li>• Prepare basic "Pandemic Questions & Answers" fact sheet(s) and all information line numbers (PHAC, MOHLTC, Durham Region Health Department) to help provide the community with timely and relevant information. <li>• Provide information on influenza via Region's Web site and provide links to PHAC, MOHLTC and other appropriate agencies. <li>• Promote community flu clinics. <li>• Develop and implement Region or Health Department 1-800 line and train staff on messages and processes and call centre capabilities. <p>Media Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive MOHLTC information and disseminate to the public as appropriate. <li>• AMOH or designate will act as the key Health Department spokesperson. <li>• Distribute news releases regarding community flu clinics, response to inquiries, provide information. <li>• Develop and implement promotional and advertising campaigns (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.) for community flu clinics. <li>• Provide media updates as requested. <p>Health Department Staff Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information provided to staff will follow procedures

		<p>outlined in the Health Department's Public Information/Directives/Inquiry section (see above).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant materials developed will be forwarded to Corporate Communications through E-mail, departmental newsletters and daily message/update board on the Intranet and the Internet for dissemination as appropriate. • Relevant information will also be shared with key contacts in area municipalities for them to disseminate throughout their organizations. <p>Information for the Health Care Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for the Durham Region health care community and neighbouring health units will be shared with each organization's assigned contact as outlined in the Media Relations section (Phase 6 – Pandemic period (<u>not in</u> North America) for them to disseminate as appropriate. • Fax About – vaccine, updates re: first flu and other influenza related information, ex. outbreaks. • E-mail notification to community agencies re: OB. <p>Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information for Durham Region Stakeholders with each organizations' assigned contact as outlined in the Media Relations section (Phase 6 –Pandemic period (<u>not in</u> North America) for them to disseminate as appropriate. • Receive information for MOHLTC and disseminate as appropriate. • Coordinate contact lists (see Environment Health list). • Determine teleconferencing abilities. <p>Rumour Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Department staff to monitor media and report any inaccurate information or rumours. • Address all rumours as they arise with factual and up-to-date information. • Provide regular and timely media updates to address rumours, whether of a general nature or those that could have a local impact (could involve frequent news conferences to deal with all media in a
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		<p>consistent manner).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If necessary, provide joint news conferences with neighbouring health units/hospitals to provide consistent information for all jurisdictions. • Regular updates of Web site information, PSAs (where appropriate), etc. • Forward appropriate information to provincial and federal government as required.
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Phase	Description	Response/Action
Phase 2	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.	<p>Public Information/Directives/Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Web site to Phase 2. • Expand pandemic surveillance Web page to Phase 2. • Update pandemic fact sheets with new information. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Media Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Health Department Staff Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for the Health Care Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to Health & Social Services Committee as requested. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Rumour Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with previous phase activities.

Phase	Description	Response/Action
<p>Phase 3</p> <p>Current Phase</p>	<p>Pandemic alert period Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact.</p>	<p>Public Information/Directives/Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Web site to Phase 3. • Expand pandemic surveillance Web page to Phase 3. • Review existing communications systems, contact numbers and ensure they are capable and current. • Direct Telus to establish a toll-free number dedicated to pandemic inquiries as outlined in attached “Pandemic Readiness Recommendation”. Delegate number of staff to this task and/or potential. • If necessary, investigate the use/liaise with in-house and private call centre operators. • Test call centre plan. • Investigate the creation of an in-house system/computer program that registers clients of the Health Department similar to DHCCR. • Develop contacts with local translation services, and a link to use for other health units, MOHLTC materials. • Review Region or Health Department 1-800 line and train staff on messages and processes and call centre capabilities. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Media Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Department communications staff to monitor calls received and provide feedback to AMOH and other key Health Department staff. • Review existing communications systems, contact numbers and ensure they are capable and current. • Identify potential staff to assist with media calls in Phase 6 and provide communications training and process to respond to inquiries. • Determine the number of back-up staff needed (see Annex H). • Continue with previous phase activities.

		<p>Health Department Staff Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing communications systems, contact numbers and ensure they are capable and current. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for the Health Care Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing communications systems, contact numbers and ensure they are capable and current. • Update contact lists (see Environment Health list). • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing communications systems, contact numbers and ensure they are capable and current. • Brief members of Health and Safety Committees (Health Department and Regional). • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Rumour Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing communications systems, contact numbers and ensure they are capable and current. • Continue with previous phase activities.
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Phase	Description	Response/Action
Phase 4	Small clusters with limited human-to-human transmission, but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.	<p>Public Information/Directives/Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Web site to Phase 4. • Assign a Health Department contact for each municipality and request that each municipality appoint a single point of contact for pandemic information (to implement during Phase 6 – Pandemic period (in North America)). • Expand Web site surveillance to Phase 4. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Media Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute a news release regarding pandemic phase (if appropriate).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pandemic media inquiries to be handled by the Health Department. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Health Department Staff Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for the Health Care Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification to local health organizations. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify Regional Chair, CAO, Department Heads (to share with Departments), Regional Councillors, and others as appropriate. • Suggest preparations/actions to school boards, OPG and other workplaces. A pandemic is likely imminent, therefore, all business plans should be reviewed and information channels should be established. <p>Rumour Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with previous phase activities.
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Phase	Description	Response/Action
Phase 5	Large cluster(s) but human-to-human spread is still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing communications systems, contact numbers and ensure they are capable and current. <p>Public Information/Directives/Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Web site to Phase 5. • Create and distribute to CAO, Department Heads, Regional Chair, Regional staff and Council are provided with basic "Pandemic Influenza Questions & Answers" or fact sheet(s) with all information line numbers (PHAC, MOHLTC, Durham Region Health Department) to help provide the community with timely and relevant information. • Create a link on Region's Web site for travellers. • Expand Web site surveillance to Phase 5.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Media Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Health Department Staff Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for the Health Care Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and distribute “Pandemic Influenza Questions & Answers” or fact sheet(s) with all information line numbers (PHAC, MOHLTC, Durham Region Health Department) to CAO, Department Heads, Regional Chair, Regional staff and Council. *Keep a copy for posting. Relevant materials developed will be forwarded to Corporate Communications through E-mail, departmental newsletters and daily message/update board on the Intranet and the Internet for dissemination as appropriate. *Keep a copy for posting. Update Web site to Phase 5. <p>Rumour Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Web site to Phase 5.
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Phase	Description	Response/Action
Phase 6	<p>Pandemic period (not in North America) Increased and sustained transmission in general population. May have subsequent waves affected different areas at different times.</p>	<p>Public Information/Directives/Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Web site to Phase 6. Develop key messages based on the response levels (i.e. necessary messages based on Phases 1 to 6). Expand Web site surveillance to Phase 6. Activate private call centre operators. Provide information via the Region’s Web site and provide links to PHAC, MOHLTC and other appropriate agencies.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide updates to the Region's Corporate Communications staff and other departments. • Update Web site to Phase 5. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Media Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute a news release including the explanation of Durham Region pandemic response level and the activities associated with each level to print and broadcast media contacts. • Media inquiries to be handled by the Health Department. • Monitor/liaise with PHAC and MOHLTC activities to establish a uniform approach to media inquiries. • Develop 5Ws (who, what, where, when, why) to provide local information in response to media inquiries. • Train additional staff to assist with media inquiries (possibly Regional staff). • Provide updates to media at minimum twice-weekly (or more frequently as requested) regarding current pandemic phase and monitoring activities occurring internationally, nationally and provincially. • Contact communications personnel in neighbouring health units (York, Simcoe, Toronto, Peterborough, HKPR), as well as hospitals and long-term care facilities in Durham Region. Ensure that similar messages are being provided to the public to keep key messages consistent. • Assistance may be sought from other Health operations/communications staff to work in conjunction with Health Department Manager of Community and Resource Development to coordinate release of information through the HOC. <p>Health Department Staff Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of phase and expected activity. • Identify and confirm key contacts to responds to inquiries (ex. acute care, DAC, schools, etc.). • Information provided to staff will follow procedures outlined in the Health Department's Public/Information/Directives/Inquiry section.
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Phase	Description	Response/Action
Phase 6	<p>Pandemic period (in North America) Increased and sustained transmission in general population. May have subsequent waves affecting different areas at different times with varying severity.</p>	<p>Public Information/Directives/Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update pandemic surveillance Web site (phase 6). • Notification of reduced services in all areas. • Develop public service announcements (PSAs) in conjunction with what has been developed at other levels of government (distribution and use of PSAs would be enacted during Phase 6 – Pandemic period (in North America)). • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Media Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of reduced services. • Media inquiries to be handled by the Health Department. • AMOH or designate will act as the key Health Department spokesperson.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent updates as required to the media regarding monitoring activities internationally, nationally, provincially and locally. • Begin PSA campaign in all local print and broadcast media. • Implement a “news flash” horizontal scrolling banner for the home page of the Region’s Web site. • All communications efforts for non-priority Health Department programs and services to be suspended; Health Department to focus on communications for pandemic issues only (unless another urgent crisis arises). • All communications directed from HOC through Health Department Manager, Community and Resource Development. Durham Region Media Centre to be set up as the media-briefing facility by Corporate Communications. • Provide weekly updates to regional departments, municipalities, health care community, workplaces and boards of education. <p>Staff Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All materials developed will be forwarded to Regional staff through E-mail departmental newsletters, daily message/update board, the Intranet and the Internet. • Information will also be shared with key contacts in area municipalities for them to disseminate throughout their organizations. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for the Health Care Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent updates as necessary to regional departments, municipalities, health care community, workplaces and boards of education. • Brief members of Health & Social Services Committee and Regional Council. • Continue with previous phase activities.
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		Rumour Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with previous phase activities.
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Phase	Description	Response/Action
	Post-pandemic period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and evaluate all communication activities. Public Information/Directives/Inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notification of the return to inter-pandemic phase. Notification of services returning to normal schedules. Update Web site regarding phase status. Continue with previous phase activities. Media Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notification of the return to inter-pandemic phase. All Regional communications staff downscaled to routine duties as appropriate. Provide frequent updates to the media regarding monitoring activities internationally, nationally, provincially and locally. Provide weekly updates to regional departments, municipalities, health care community, workplaces and boards of education. All communications efforts for other Health Department programs and services to be reinstated as feasible. HOC closed; all communications directed from normal sources. Continue with previous phase activities. Staff Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notification of the return to inter-pandemic phase. All Regional communications staff downscaled to routine duties as appropriate. Information will also be shared with key contacts in area municipalities for them to disseminate throughout their organizations. Continue with previous phase activities.

		<p>Information for the Health Care Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of the return to inter-pandemic phase. • All Regional communications staff downscaled to routine duties as appropriate. • Create an influenza materials/product inventory. • Continue with previous phase activities. <p>Information for Key Stakeholders (including Regional/Municipal employees, school boards...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of the return to inter-pandemic phase. • All Regional communications staff downscaled to routine duties as appropriate. • Provide information for Durham Region Stakeholders with each organizations' assigned contact as outlined in the Media Relations section for them to disseminate as appropriate. • Provide weekly updates to regional departments, municipalities, health care community, workplaces and boards of education. • Presentation to Regional Council. • Brief members of Regional Health and Safety Committees. <p>Rumour Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of the return to inter-pandemic phase. • Continue with previous phase activities.
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