

Participant Handout

'School Closing'

as a

Potential Means

to Counter

Pandemic Influenza

Table Top Exercise

(TTX)

‘School Closing’

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Exercise Scenario

The World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed sustained human-to-human transfer of a virulent influenza virus in several Asian countries and has determined that an influenza pandemic is underway. (WHO - Phase 6.) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised that the pandemic influenza virus is likely to reach one or more of the contiguous 48 states within 30 days.

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is funding the development of a vaccine against the pandemic influenza virus and intends to acquire enough for all US citizens. However, the first lots of this vaccine are not expected to be available for 6 months.

The Strategic National Stockpile has begun to distribute antiviral drugs, surgical masks, respirators, and other medical materiel to States in quantities proportional to their population to supplement the supplies held by public and private entities within the State.

Communities are advised to consider various non-pharmaceutical measures that might help contain an influenza pandemic. These include encouraging influenza victims to stay at home (self-isolation), encouraging the household contacts of influenza victims also to stay at home (self-quarantine), discouraging large public gatherings, and closing schools for the duration of the local epidemic.

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Pandemic Influenza Information

School closing warrants special consideration because children are not only among those at highest risk for influenza but are also among the most likely to spread the disease to others. School closing has an immediate community-wide impact that can be effected by a single-policy decision. The likely adverse socioeconomic impacts of school closing upon the community will be substantial. Therefore, community leaders should weigh the pros and cons of school closure in consultation with representatives of all stakeholders.

Potential Impacts – Globally:

- INEVITABLE SPREAD OF TRANSMISSABLE VIRUS WITHIN WEEKS/MONTHS
- 30% ILLNESS/INFECTION RATE
- SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE REQUIRING MEDICAL CARE
- LONG LEAD TIME TO OVERCOME INADEQUATE QUANTITIES OF MEDICAL/NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL SUPPLIES
- UNDETERMINABLE MORTALITY RATE
- ABSENTEEISM WILL IMPAIR ESSENTIAL SERVICES (HEALTHCARE, PUBLIC SAFETY, POWER, FOOD SUPPLY, TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS)

Potential Impacts – United States :

200,000 – 2 MILLION DEATHS

- 1 – 10 MILLION HOSPITALIZED
- PERVASIVE ABSENTEEISM
- SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKENED ECONOMY AND NATIONAL SECURITY
 - 5% GDP LOSS
 - \$600 MILLION NATIONAL INCOME LOSS

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Discussion Question Categories:

Public Health Risk & Countermeasures

Decision-Making Authority

Impacts from Closing Schools

Impact on Other Public & Private Entities

(for more information go to www.pandemicflu.gov)