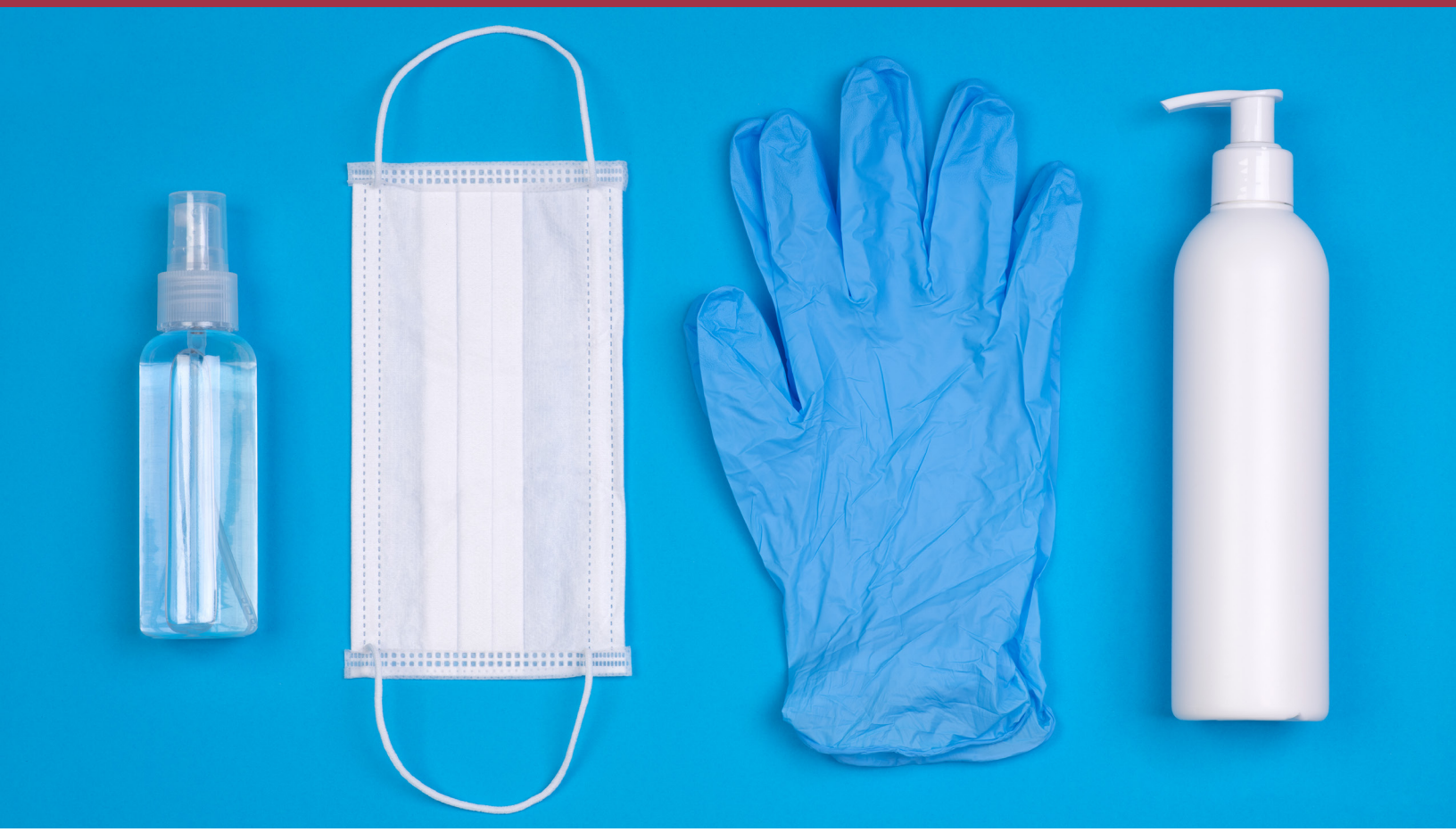
READINESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOLS

REMS

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

Infectious Disease Tabletop Exercise



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Infectious Disease Tabletop Exercise Participant Guide

For information on how to lead the tabletop exercise, see the accompanying document "Emergency Exercises Training Package Instructions" within the Emergency Exercises Package.

In this tabletop exercise, you should imagine that you are a member of your school's emergency planning team and that you have access to only the resources and systems you currently have in place. You will discuss your response to an infectious disease outbreak — both the scenario and the disease are hypothetical.

A scenario will first be presented to you and then be followed by individual questions. After each question is asked, you should pause and discuss it with your group. Additional information on how the scenario unfolds, called injects, is provided, and questions are then posed on how the school would respond.

Scenario

Two weeks before the end of the school year, you hear on the news that another country has witnessed cases of a new strain of H5N10 influenza, commonly known as horse flu. There is evidence that the strain of flu can pass from human to human. This can happen when an individual with the flu spreads droplets to another person through coughing, sneezing, or talking or when an individual touches a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touches their own mouth or nose. Observed symptoms include severe coughing, body aches, fatigue, and a high fever, and the incubation period is typically between 1 and 4 days.

During your end-of-year planning team meeting, one member raises concerns about the spread and impact of the horse flu.

Discussion Questions

To help allay the member's concern, how would you respond to the following questions? As questions are answered, have a volunteer take notes to help later with the exercise debrief.

1. Does your school or school district currently have established protocols on responding to public health, medical, or mental/behavioral health emergencies, such as infectious disease outbreaks? What are they? Where would you find this information — does a Public Health, Medical, and Mental Health Annex or an Infectious Disease Annex to the school emergency operations plan (EOP) contain this information? Is the information current, or does it need updating?
2. What courses of action do your EOP and annexes direct you to take before a health-related emergency? What actions can you take right now?
3. How could this affect the school's or school district's education calendar and education requirements for next year, such as assessment and testing?

More specific information will now be presented with Inject #1.

Inject #1

Three months later, and 1 week before the start of the new school year, there are news reports that the horse flu has spread to the United States and cases have been observed in five states and territories, including yours. You are notified by your state/territorial and county public authorities that it is likely only a matter of time before your locality also observes cases of this type of flu. They tell both public and private schools to be on the lookout for cases of the flu and recommend that school and school district planning teams meet with their

local public health partners to review their EOP and clarify roles and responsibilities. They are not currently recommending that schools delay the start of the academic year.

A new nurse joins the school. In his orientation process, he mentions that he, too, has heard about the spread of the horse flu, and he wants to learn more about the existing programs and plans the school has in place to address infectious diseases. The staff member providing the orientation turns to you to help answer some of the nurse's more specific questions.

Discussion Questions

Now, please answer the following questions he posed:

1. Do you have a surveillance system in place for absences? If so, how is it linked to the local public health authority or to an existing state or regional monitoring and surveillance system?
2. How would you enforce, or create if there are none, effective policies pertaining to handwashing, cough and sneeze etiquette, routine cleaning and sanitation, handling of animals in school or on field trips, and student vaccinations?
3. What additional strategies do you have to reduce the spread of an infectious disease, such as having lunchtime in the classrooms or alternating school dates, and what are the criteria for implementing them?
4. What protocols do you have in place with your local public health authority to collect and share information about threats to public health? To whom does your school or school district report a disease outbreak?
5. If the school or school district did need to close to help prevent the spread of an infectious disease, under what circumstances would that happen? Who would make the decision about closing the school or school district?

Now that the team has discussed these questions, you'll hear how the scenario hypothetically unfolds with Inject #2.

Inject #2

Two months into the new school year, cases of the horse flu are reported in every state and territory. Approximately 5 percent of your student body has confirmed cases of the horse flu. Your local public health authority informs the school that children and adults should still get vaccinated against the seasonal flu, but the vaccination will likely not be effective against the horse strain of flu.

The health authority also provides the school with a set of questions that the secretary can ask a parent or guardian when confirming that their child is sick. This includes whether a doctor has confirmed that the child has a case of the horse flu.

The health authority asks that the school regularly report on how many students, staff members, and teachers are suspected of having the horse flu. The health authority also states that it will continue to monitor the situation and may require your school or school district to close to help prevent the spread of the horse flu. While large gatherings are not prohibited, they are discouraged.

Due to the high number of students who are ill, you convene your planning and response teams.

Discussion Questions

Now, answer the following questions:

1. What steps would you take if your local public health authority asked the school to temporarily close? What is the process for reopening the school or reconvening students?

2. After a closure, what steps would your school take to ensure continuity of education, including teaching and learning; special education and related services; and school-based medical services and food programs, if provided? Do you have any established protocols for what to do, such as in the Continuity of Operations Annex to your EOP?
3. What information would you share about your sick students, if any? Whom would you share this information with and how? Is this information included in your EOP, such as in a Communications and Warning Annex?
4. How would specific populations of the school be affected, such as those with disabilities or access and functional needs? How would you identify and address those needs?
5. How would you enforce exclusion guidelines consistently and adapt attendance policies, as necessary? What is your school dismissal policy, and how would dismissals be handled?

Now, we're moving on to Inject #3.

Inject #3

After a vaccine is created and the population begins getting immunized, rates of the horse flu begin to subside. Your local public health authority continues to provide you weekly updates and asks that schools and school districts continue their surveillance systems for a possible resurgence of the flu.

Discussion Questions

Again, answer the following questions:

1. What is the school's plan to continue monitoring students, teachers, and staff for a possible resurgence?
2. What emotional, social, or behavioral support would you provide to students, teachers, and staff who were impacted by the flu, such as students who became ill and are having difficulty fitting back into the school?

This concludes the exercise.

Conclusion

An exercise debrief — called a "hot wash" — should now be conducted, and an after-action report developed, which identifies and documents gaps, shortfalls, and lessons learned. You should consider

1. What did the exercise demonstrate about how the school or school district would respond to this type of emergency event?
2. What went well in the exercise?
3. What lessons were learned?
4. What gaps in the school's or school district's EOP, including annexes, were identified?
5. How will the EOP and annexes be revised, if needed?
6. Who will be responsible for making these revisions?
7. When will these revisions be made by?

Resources on Preparing for Infectious Diseases That Impact K-12 Schools

Infectious Disease Annex Development

Pandemic Planning: Developing an Infectious Disease Annex, Fact Sheet (REMS TA Center). Provides school district leaders and school core planning teams with recommendations to develop or enhance an Infectious Disease Annex within an emergency operations plan (EOP) and considerations specific to pandemic planning.

School EOPs In-Depth: Planning for Infectious Diseases, Online Course (REMS TA Center). Helps school and school district planning teams incorporate infectious disease planning into a school EOP, including creating an Infectious Disease Annex.

Infectious Disease Planning, Specialized Training Package (REMS TA Center). Provides materials that may be used by individuals to self-teach, or to train others, such as through virtual or in-person professional learning opportunities. This module on planning for infectious diseases includes a PowerPoint presentation with speaker's notes, instructions, and an accompanying resource guide.

Addressing Biological Hazards That May Impact Students, Staff, and Visitors, Web Page (REMS TA Center). Offers resources, within "Infectious Diseases" from the "Select Topic" drop-down menu, on diseases such as Ebola, seasonal influenza, Zika virus, measles, and other infectious diseases. Information and guidance are provided by multiple Federal departments and agencies on preparing for and recovering from infectious disease outbreaks.

Understanding the Role of School Nurses in Supporting School Safety Before, During, and After an Emergency, Webinar (REMS TA Center). Explores the role of school nurses in supporting school EOP development, including infectious disease planning.

The Role of Educators in Public Health Emergencies, Webinar (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]). Provides information on how educators can support school communities during public health emergencies, including infectious disease outbreaks.

Infectious Disease Exercises

COVID-19 Recovery CISA Tabletop Exercise Package, Web Page (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency [CISA]). Offers materials to be used to plan, conduct, and evaluate a virtual tabletop exercise designed to assess organizations' recovery and continuity of operations plans in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Tool Box, Web Page (REMS TA Center). Contains a video to conduct a tabletop exercise with a pandemic scenario, which was created by a state education agency. Also contains materials for planning, conducting, and evaluating emergency exercises.

Modifying Education Agency Exercises and Drills in Response to the Pandemic: Protecting Students, Faculty, Staff, and the Whole School Community While Practicing Plans, Fact Sheet (REMS TA Center). Provides information about conducting exercises and drills during the COVID-19 pandemic, including recommendations for modifying plans and key considerations when modifying school-based exercises.

School EOP Planning 101: Modifying Exercises and Drills in Response to the Pandemic, Webinar (REMS TA Center). Learn about strategies that K-12 education agencies can use in collaboration with their team or multidisciplinary community partners to modify and enhance efforts to practice school EOPs.

Data Sources for Infectious Disease

National Outbreak Reporting System Dashboard, Website (HHS, CDC). Hosts an interactive map displaying data on reported outbreaks of a variety of infectious diseases, which can be filtered by year, state, environmental setting, and mode of transmission.

Waterborne Disease and Outbreak Surveillance Reporting, Website (HHS, CDC). Shares information and data on waterborne diseases and outbreaks.

COVID Data Tracker, Website (HHS, CDC). Displays data reflecting current rates of COVID-19 cases, deaths, hospitalizations, and vaccinations. This data tracker is also available in Spanish.

Infectious Disease Mitigation

Ordering Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Schools: Keeping the Whole School Community Safe in School Buildings, Fact Sheet (REMS TA Center). Provides information and tips on using masks and personal protective equipment as mitigation tools, such as understanding types; designing usage requirements based on role; confirming state requirements and recommendations; training students, faculty, and staff on proper usage; creating virtual and in-person trainings; developing a self-inspection checklist; addressing issues with access and shortages; and identifying supportive resources.

Healthy Indoor Environments in Schools: Plans, Practices and Principles for Maintaining Healthy Learning Environment, Web Page (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). Hosts a series of Webinars to support professional learning on best practices for healthy indoor air quality, including ventilation, filtration, and cleaning, that can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases in schools.

Influenza (Flu): Information for Schools and Childcare Providers, Website (HHS, CDC). Shares guidance to help prevent the spread of influenza (flu) among students and teachers in schools, guidance on cleaning and disinfecting schools, resources for school-located vaccination clinics, and other resources on common flu topics for school administrators, teachers, staff, and parents. This resource is also available in Spanish.

How to Clean and Disinfect Schools to Help Slow the Spread of Flu, Publication (HHS, CDC). Offers best practices for cleaning and disinfecting school environments to prevent the spread of influenza.

Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs): At School, Website (HHS, CDC). Outlines preventative actions school communities can take to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses.

COVID-19: Schools, Child Care, and Colleges, Website (HHS, CDC). Offers guidance for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in education settings, including information and resources for vaccination, testing, cleaning, and ventilation. The Interactive School Ventilation Tool shares data on the effectiveness of different types of ventilation controls in classrooms for decreasing levels of virus particles that circulate in the air. The COVID-19 Public Education Campaign: School Communities Toolkit contains tools and resources to help school communities spread awareness about COVID-19 and associated preventative measures, like cleaning, masking, and vaccination.

Pandemic Flu Checklist: K-12 School Administrators, Publication (HHS, CDC). Highlights actions that school administrators can take before, during, and after a flu pandemic.

SchoolVaxView, Website (HHS, CDC). Offers information, resources, and state Web links for school administrators, school nurses, and parents to use regarding vaccinations for school-age children.

Safe Schools Checklist: How to Get Your School Community Vaccinated and Maintain Safe, In-Person Learning All Year Long, Website (HHS). Lists actionable strategies school leaders can take to improve COVID-19 vaccination rates in their community. This checklist is also available in Spanish.

Continuity of Operations During Infectious Disease

Continuity of Operations (COOP) Planning for Education Agencies: Ensuring Continuity of Teaching and Learning During Prolonged Absences, Dismissals, and Closures, Fact Sheet (REMS TA Center). Provides an overview of continuity of operations planning, key considerations for the continuity of teaching and learning, and additional resources.

Continuity of Operations (COOP) Planning for Education Agencies: Ensuring Continuity of Feeding and Food Distribution During Prolonged Absences, Dismissals, and Closures, Fact Sheet (REMS TA Center). Offers recommendations to support continuity of feeding and food distribution, common challenges identified by state partners, and Federal resources to support continuity of feeding and food distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ensuring Continuity of Feeding and Food Distribution During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Webinar (REMS TA Center). Learn about this key element of continuity of operations planning; models being used on the state level; and Federal authorizations, waivers, and resources. Presenters represent the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Georgia Department of Education, Tennessee Department of Education, New Jersey Department of Education, Oklahoma State Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, and REMS TA Center.

Supports for Students and Families Experiencing Homelessness During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Webinar (REMS TA Center). Learn how schools can support students and families experiencing homelessness as they plan for reopening and about common challenges faced by education agencies and solutions.

IS-520: Introduction to Continuity of Operations Planning for Pandemic Influenzas, Online Course (DHS, Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], Emergency Management Institute). Introduces pandemic influenza and its effects and offers strategies organizations can use to respond to and recover from a widespread pandemic. This online course is also available in Spanish.

Pandemic Influenza Continuity of Operations Annex Template Instructions, Publication (DHS, FEMA). Provides a template for organizations to create a customized Continuity of Operations Annex that accounts for pandemic influenza.

Health, Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Recovery From Infectious Disease

Resilience Quick Links for School Personnel, Families and Students: Ensuring the Well-Being of the Whole School Community During School at Home, Publication (REMS TA Center). Offers key practical steps and quick links to learning opportunities and resources on resilience and well-being in the context of a pandemic and other emergency events.

Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks, Fact Sheet (HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA]). Offers strategies for talking to children about an infectious disease outbreak, and for supporting the variety of emotional responses children may have during an infectious disease outbreak. This resource is also available in Spanish, Somali, and Hmong.

Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019, Publication (National Child Traumatic Stress Network). Shares information for supporting families in preparing for and responding to a pandemic, including considerations for helping children and youth cope. This resource is also available in Chinese.

Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health: Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation During an Infectious Disease Outbreak, Fact Sheet (HHS, SAMHSA). Provides information on typical reactions during an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation and ways to support yourself.

Tools for Educators During a Public Health Crisis, Fact Sheet (Northeast and Caribbean Mental Health Technology Transfer Center). Offers practical strategies and information to support educators in maintaining their well-being, providing emotional support to students, and communicating with parents during an infectious disease outbreak or pandemic.

Creating a Culture of Infectious Disease Preparedness

School Initiatives

Healthy Schools, Healthy People, Website (American Cleaning Institute and HHS, CDC). Provides tools, activities, and resources to help schools teach and reinforce handwashing and cleaning practices to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Global Handwashing Day, Web Page (HHS, CDC). Contains resources and materials that may be used to promote handwashing in your community.

National Influenza Vaccination Week, Web Page (HHS, CDC). Contains influenza vaccination messages, resources, and activities that may be shared with your community.

Classroom Resources

Ready Wrigley Prepares for Flu Season, Publication (HHS, CDC). Presents a story and accompanying activities to teach children how to prevent the spread of influenza viruses. This book is also available in Spanish.

Ready Wrigley: Mosquito Bites Are Bad!, Publication (HHS, CDC). Presents a story and accompanying activities to teach children how to protect against mosquitos that may transmit infectious diseases. This book is also available in Portuguese and Samoan.

Lesson Plans: Examining Risk Factors Associated With COVID-19 Using the Pandemic Vulnerability Index, Web Page (HHS, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences). Shares two lesson plans for teaching high school students about factors that impact the spread and outcomes of infectious disease outbreaks, including risk factors and preventative measures.

BAM! Body and Mind Classroom Resources for Teachers: Infectious Disease Epidemiology Module, Web Page (HHS, CDC). Contains a lesson with activities for teachers of grades 4-9 to use in the classroom to introduce students to epidemiology and infectious diseases.

Community Protectors: Children Help Communities Stay Safe From COVID-19, Web Page (HHS, CDC). Offers a 20-page hybrid story and coloring book for children ages 5-10 to learn about how they can stay safe and help protect their communities from the spread of COVID-19.