

# **Alabama's Community Containment Plan**

**April 16, 2007**



## Executive Summary

In March 2006, the Alabama Department of Public Health's (ADPH) Emergency Preparedness (EP) Advisory Council voted to include Pandemic Influenza (PI) preparedness as part of its focus and mission.

In May 2006, EP Advisory Council was divided into seven sectors; business, communications, education, faith-based/community, first responder, government, and healthcare, to promote and focus PI planning to these segments of the population. This planning focus of the sectors included community mitigation intervention.

In December 2006, the council selected leaders and alternate leaders for each sector to work with department staff to promote PI planning/education for their respective sectors. As a result, the "Health is in Your Hands" campaign was created to educate the public. Pre- and post-tests were administered to gauge the effectiveness of the campaign. Three commercials; "Wash Your Hands", "Cover Your Cough", and "Reduce Transmission", were produced in Mobile, Alabama and were aired statewide for six weeks. All of these commercials can be viewed on the web at [www.adph.org/pandemicflu](http://www.adph.org/pandemicflu). These commercial spots, along with an array of pandemic printed materials can be found on this website. The following printed materials were created in English and Spanish versions: Individual and Family Handbook, Wash Your Hands, Cover Your Cough, Flu and You, Cleaning and Sterilizing, and Checklists. Educational material is also being translated into Korean, Vietnamese, Russian, and Braille. Various educational materials and programs are being closed captioned or interpreted for the deaf and hearing impaired.

The department created and sponsored a listserv entitled SHARE (Stakeholder Help, Advice, and Recommendation Exchange) to ask questions, seek answers, and share new information with advisory council members and members of the pandemic sectors. For example, in February 2007, an email to all subscribers (currently 199) was distributed through SHARE with the Health and Human Services (HHS) Interim Pre-Pandemic Planning Guidance.

The department also co-sponsored a law enforcement pandemic influenza summit with the Alabama Department of Public Safety. This summit, a three hour satellite broadcast, discussed community mitigation strategies and social distancing. The summit was viewed by over 5,000 people nationwide in 43 states, with over 1,800 people in 199 sites throughout Alabama. The summit can currently be viewed via on-demand webcast at [www.adph.org/alphtn](http://www.adph.org/alphtn).

Another major emphasis has been on educating other state agencies on the importance of planning for pandemic influenza, including continuity of operations planning. Currently, the department has met with 14 agencies: Alabama Governor's Office; Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries; Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs; Alabama Department of Education; Alabama Department of Emergency Management; Alabama Department of Finance; Alabama

Department of Homeland Security; Alabama Department of Human Resources; Alabama Department of Industrial Relations; Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation; Alabama Department of State Personnel; Alabama Department of Public Safety; and Alabama Department of Senior Services.

During these meetings, staff discussed the following: basic PI information; key elements of an operational plan; social distancing and other community mitigation strategies; importance of and impact on primary and alternate work locations; communications; telecommuting and information technology capabilities; safety and health of employees and their families; and the importance of training and exercising plans at each stage of development. This type of planning will continue with all state departments, along with other activities. Currently, the department is distributing packets with educational materials and once complete, the department will offer two additional training workshops to provide basic pandemic information to these departments. Once those two workshops have been completed, the department will begin working individually with these departments to discuss community mitigation planning and other PI topics, such as continuity of operations planning.

In March 2007, EP Advisory Council was briefed on the community mitigation guidance and encouraged to review and share this information with their respective organizations. The department also purchased and distributed, in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Education, a four-disc set of the Channing Bete PI presentation material to all public and private schools in the state. This material was developed for K – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade, middle school, and high school aged students. These presentations have three audio-embedded lessons with 30-, 45-, and 60-minute options and include social distancing information. The Department of Education also ordered and distributed 92,000 of the department’s “Pandemic Influenza Individual and Family Handbook” to all teachers statewide.

The department has also collaborated with the Department of Education on a satellite broadcast targeted to school superintendents and principals to discuss necessary school planning for a pandemic. The program was viewed by over 2,400 nationwide in 39 states, with 1,440 people in 231 sites in Alabama.

The department completed another mass mailing to all child care centers in an attempt to begin the educational process with these entities. The packets included all education materials along with information on how to order more information and how to contact the department for questions.

By August 2007, nine more school dismissal exercises will be conducted throughout the state.

#### Planning Assumptions

- All HHS Planning Assumptions will be applicable.
- Pandemic Influenza Severity Index will be determined prior to the virus introduction into Alabama.

- Monitoring isolation and quarantine will occur early in the outbreak, but will end once the outbreak becomes widespread.
- The decision to close and reopen public and private schools, child care centers, and secondary education will be determined at the highest government level and will apply statewide.
- Reopening educational facilities may be determined by the cessation of disease and not the disease severity.

### Isolation and Treatment of Ill Persons

Isolation of ill persons and quarantine of exposed persons are well-established components of the armamentarium of public health control measures. The application of isolation and quarantine to pandemic influenza is problematic, because influenza is infectious before the onset of symptoms. Due to the short incubation period of influenza, it will be difficult to isolate an ill person before he/she spreads influenza and to quarantine exposed contacts before they become ill. Isolation and control may be most useful in the early stages of a pandemic influenza. Isolation and quarantine activities could be overseen by public health personnel, if they focused on ill persons arriving from outside the United States with symptoms compatible with influenza. Once widespread person-to-person spread of pandemic influenza began to occur in the United States, isolation and quarantine would have to be self-imposed and not monitored by public health personnel.

In 2005, the department's Office of General Council (OGC) compared current laws and regulations on quarantine with model legislation and drafted a bill for introduction into the legislature that outlined necessary procedures when quarantine was deemed necessary. This bill, however, did not get introduced. Before the 2007 legislative session, the bill was reviewed and revised, but other legislative priorities took precedence. During the 2008 legislative session, further review and revision of the bill are anticipated with the expectation of introduction.

In 2003-2004, as a result of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak, the state epidemiologist drafted policies and forms to serve as guidelines for actions to take with suspect SARS patients who entered Alabama. These policies and forms will serve as a set of guidelines for steps to take with suspected human avian influenza and suspected pandemic influenza in travelers from foreign countries.

Based on input from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, staff of the department's Division of Epidemiology will develop procedures for effecting isolation of travelers from another country entering the United States with symptoms of a novel strain of influenza or who develop symptoms within several days of arrival. Such persons would be isolated at home, or if severely ill, provided respiratory isolation in a hospital.

During the period before a pandemic influenza becomes multi-focal in Alabama, the plan calls for:

- Lectures and exercises obtained from Avian Influenza Rapid Response Training will be modified and presented to the area surveillance nurses at monthly meetings.
- As part of the training directed at human avian influenza, previously mentioned SARS forms and policies will be modified to use as a reference during table top exercises.
- Staff of the Division of Epidemiology will monitor the occurrence of avian and possible pandemic influenza activity in the rest of the world, and keep abreast of CDC guidance concerning detecting novel strains of influenza, isolating ill persons and quarantining persons who have been exposed.
- Case definitions will be developed for specific practical reasons, such as whom to culture, whom to treat, and who should be isolated. As the situation evolves, case definitions may be developed and/or revised by ICS and disseminated to appropriate target audiences via e-mail, the Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT) system and public media.
- In terms of finding cases for possible isolation, the Epidemiology Division will cooperate with quarantine activities at our international airports in Birmingham, Mobile, Huntsville and Montgomery.
- Area surveillance nurses and other area staff will assure appropriate culturing for influenza virus. They will also monitor the health status of ill persons in isolation for ten days from the day of the onset of symptoms and determine if those quarantined at home should receive medical evaluation or treatment.
- ALERT and mailings will be used to inform medical practitioners about the department's recommendations concerning who should be cultured or treated with antiviral medication.
- It is not anticipated that physicians will need training on the diagnosis of influenza during this stage.
- Educating individuals and groups in the principles of social distancing would begin to occur, including how to achieve social distancing in institutions such as retail outlets.
- The media would be used to disseminate education about social distancing.
- Installation of UV lights in workplaces and retail outlets would be encouraged.
- Vaccines will not likely be used for those isolated or quarantined. ADPH will follow CDC guidance regarding who should receive antiviral treatment. However, depending on supply ADPH will treat both those isolated (to help decrease symptoms) and quarantined (to prevent illness).
- Assistance will likely occur based on local community resources and preplanning. Those communities that are unable to meet local needs will contact the Bureau of Professional and Support Services for assistance in providing subsistence items.

#### Quarantine of Household Contacts of Ill Individuals

In accordance with CDC guidelines, interviews will be conducted and exposed contacts quarantined.

In anticipation of the period when pandemic influenza causes illness in Alabama, these are the planning assumptions:

- Contacts of those isolated will be quarantined for three days (or whatever is the maximum incubation period of the pandemic virus) after last exposure and will be monitored for onset of symptoms such as fever. If fever occurs, they will be treated as potential cases and isolated.
- The media would be used to inform the public of symptoms of influenza and the status of medical facilities (in terms of waiting times) in an attempt to encourage individuals with illnesses consistent with influenza to stay home (self-isolate), unless they are severely ill. Situations warranting medical care would be disseminated to help patients decide when to seek medical care. Hotline phone numbers and website addresses will be advertised. Hospital public relation departments will be encouraged to support these recommendations.
- The media will be used to encourage exposed contacts to self-quarantine away from ill patients (though it may be necessary for some contacts to stay with ill persons to care for them). At this stage in the outbreak, it is not anticipated that public health will attempt to isolate patients, quarantine contacts and monitor them because of the large number of persons involved.
- It is not anticipated, at this point in the pandemic, that there will be a way for government to assure subsistence help for those self-isolating or self-quarantining. Assistance will likely occur based only on local community resources and pre-planning. Those communities that are unable to meet local needs will contact ADPH Bureau of Professional and Support Services for assistance in providing subsistence items.

#### Dismissal of School and Closure of Child Care Programs

The work done with education and the child care community around planning for possible school dismissal or child care program closure is elaborated in the Executive Summary above. ADOE has mandated that all school systems update their safety plans to include pandemic influenza. The Department of Education's, School Safety Division, will be reviewing these plans to determine completeness and corrective actions. The communication sections of these plans will be vital to the implementation in a pandemic.

During the pre-pandemic phase, the communication plan calls for educational facilities to inform parents, students, and families by utilizing the Channing Bete CDs, printed materials, and information available at [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org) ( as mentioned in the Executive Summary above). During and post-pandemic, most information will be relayed through media outlets, hotlines and websites, both public health and education.

Under normal circumstances, decisions about school dismissal and reopening are made by the local education authority (LEA). During a pandemic, issues about school dismissal will pertain statewide and involve an extended duration. Because of this magnitude, it is anticipated that a statewide decision will be made by the Governor, based on advice from the State Health Officer and State Superintendent of Education.

At this time, the discussion to create alternative methods to conduct extramural activities has not occurred. After awareness education has occurred more extensively in educational facilities, more details will be clarified.

### Community Social Distancing

Current efforts to plan for community social distancing have been educating all sectors on the concept and begin conceptualizing ways it can be accomplished in their organization. Since July 2006, all PI standard presentations given have included the concept of social distancing. Dissemination of information about social distancing will occur through internet, partnerships with statewide partner agencies, and departmental trainings and exercises. Recently, the department partnered with an information hotline that serves the state. Members of the public can call the toll-free hotline to receive answers to pandemic influenza questions and get information mailed to them. Additional information is detailed in Priority 4: Communication – Dissemination.

The department's incident command structure will incorporate social distancing strategies, as needed by implementing limited travel, teleconferencing and working from home to reduce the risk of person-to-person transmission of influenza. Additional information is detailed in the Alabama Pandemic Influenza Operational Plan, Health Priority 2: Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).