

Pandemic Preparedness Update

February 2008



Pandemic Influenza Local Objectives to be completed by July 31, 2008:

1. Conduct one pandemic influenza exercise (community disease containment being a priority if not already exercised).
2. Convene at least one partner/stakeholder meeting to review the Wisconsin Antiviral Distribution Policy and determine how the policy will be implemented locally.
3. Continue work on three-year work plans and provide a summary of progress to DPH.

Competitive Pandemic Influenza Grant Application:

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health is applying for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Pandemic Influenza Funding Announcement for Competitive Proposals (Activities). The 62 project areas (states, territories and localities that are direct recipients of PHEP funds) are eligible to compete for the funds but are not guaranteed funding. We will be submitting three separate proposals covering three of the seven funding opportunities.

Proposal 1: Demonstration projects for use of public engagement as part of the public health decision-making process. Project Leads: Eric Ostermann, Wisconsin Public Health Association, Lisa Pentony, Division of Public Health

Purpose: The public engagement demonstration project on pandemic influenza has five purposes:

1. To inform and assist state and local level decision-makers involved in pending, values-oriented policy decisions related to pandemic influenza planning
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of engaging both citizens-at-large and other stakeholders in public health policy decisions
3. To increase state and local capacity to effectively engage the public on policy choices
4. To empower citizens to participate effectively in public decision-making work
5. To achieve results that enhance public trust in public health decisions regarding policy choices

The Wisconsin Public Health Association and the Division of Public Health will convene 4-5 regional public engagement meetings.

Proposal 2: Electronic laboratory data exchange to support pandemic influenza surveillance. Project Leads: Steve Marshall, State Lab of Hygiene and Jim Grant, Division of Public Health

Purpose: To facilitate electronic exchange of laboratory orders and test results among public health laboratories, their surveillance partners, and CDC. This project is intended to support demonstrations of laboratory and state information systems capable of performing the following functions incorporating PHIN-compliant approaches:

1. Sharing of influenza surveillance laboratory test results from state laboratories with state and local and cross-border international public health partners, as well as with CDC
2. Ordering influenza reference tests and sharing electronic reference test results between partners and CDC
3. Interstate and intrastate and bi-national laboratory test result and test order exchange supporting surge capacity among laboratories

The Wisconsin project would enhance the WSLH portal so there is one system for web-based manual entry of 1) influenza rapid test results from physician offices, 2) influenza culture and PCR results from clinical virus laboratories, and 3) reportable disease conditions from clinical laboratories under the Electronic Laboratory Reporting (ELR) project.

Proposal 3: Development of interventions that promote preparedness for pandemic disease among identified at-risk populations. Project Leads: Lorna Will Division of Public Health with City of Milwaukee Health Department

Purpose: The purpose of this program is to identify replicable practices and model interventions that promote preparedness in populations with vulnerabilities during public health emergencies, particularly during a pandemic disease event.

The Wisconsin proposal will focus on the rapid evaluation and education of newly-arrived refugees.

Pandemic Influenza State Operational Plan:

Recently the Department of Health and Human Services provided states with results of a draft interim assessment of state pandemic influenza planning. With that, they presented a timeline for next steps including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) objective to develop a second guidance document for the preparation by states of updated operational plans. In January HHS hosted a series of regional workshops for federal staff to seek recommendations from state cabinet officials on the “expansion, refinement, and/or refocusing of the draft guidance and evaluation criteria. (Please see attached Guidance for States’ Pandemic Influenza Operational Planning)

At the Region V meeting, Wisconsin was represented by the Department of Health and Family Services, Department of Military Affairs, Wisconsin Emergency Management, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Department of Administration, Office of Justice Assistance, Office of State Employment Relations, Department of Workforce Development, and Department of Public Instruction.

The timeline for states to revise and resubmit State Pandemic Operational Plans is as follows:

- January 31, 2008 – States submit feedback to federal government of draft guidance. (See attached: Wisconsin Feedback re: State Pandemic Operational Plan Guidance)
- February 15, 2008 – Release of final guidance
- May 14, 2008 – State Operational Plans due to HHS
- July 30, 2008 – US Government shares assessments with states for comments
- September 25, 2008 – US Government will share final assessments with states, Congress and the general public

Pandemic.Wisconsin.gov:

Pandemic.Wisconsin.gov is presented by the Wisconsin Division of Public Health, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Departments of Administration, Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection, Military Affairs/Emergency Management, Natural Resources, and Public Instruction and other Wisconsin agencies. The website provides information on pandemic influenza, avian influenza, and seasonal influenza to the general public. Additionally, the website contains community resources, business resources, school resources, health care resources, and resources for individuals and families.

Pandemic.Wisconsin.gov is also frequently updated to include pertinent news and other information related to influenza. We encourage local and regional partners to submit information on upcoming exercises, meetings, and best practices related to pandemic influenza planning. Information to be considered for inclusion on the website can be sent to: DHFSWIpanflu@dhfs.state.wi.us

DPH Pandemic Influenza Objectives to be completed by July 31, 2008:

There are currently seven priority projects for the Wisconsin Pandemic Influenza supplement to PHEP grant budget year 8. Each priority project has identified leaders/teams, work plans, and timelines for completion of activities.

The priority projects and team leads are:

1. Pandemic Triggers – Richard Heffernan
2. DPH COOP – Tom Anderson
3. Antiviral Distribution – Casey Schumann/Sara Strell
4. Pandemic Triggers Exercise – Donald Neuert/Traci Dusso
5. Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) Sentinel Clinician Expansion Project – Tom Haupt
6. Pandemic Countermeasures Exercise on Antiviral Distribution – Donald Neuert/Traci Dusso

1. Pandemic Triggers:

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health is developing a state-specific guide for actions and activities to be taken in response to the various stages of an influenza pandemic. This document will include clarification of specific triggers and the corresponding state-level public health actions. Based on the state-level triggers, local health departments and other state agencies will then be able to plan coordinated response activities.

To the extent possible the triggers will be based on scientific evidence regarding the timing and effectiveness of public health response activities. To achieve this we will:

1. Review current literature, guidelines and plans from other states and jurisdictions.
2. Compile and conduct a retrospective analysis of available Wisconsin influenza surveillance data sources to assess their relative utility for tracking seasonal influenza epidemics. Specifically we will evaluate whether the data source provides indications of early circulation of the virus, clear indications of the start of community-wide influenza, information about which age-groups are effected, the relative magnitude of the epidemic, and the severity of illness. Data sources that will be included in this analysis include:
 - Influenza laboratory test results
 - Influenza Sentinel Provider data
 - P&I hospitalization data
 - P&I mortality dataOther data sources under consideration for this analysis include:
 - Outpatient ILI visits
 - Emergency department ILI visits
 - School absenteeism data
 - Over-the-counter pharmacy data
3. Provide a justification for identified triggers and associated activities.

2. DPH COOP:

A continuity of operations workgroup and exercise team has been established, including members of several state agencies – DPH/DHFS/DOA/WEM. The workgroup is comprised of personnel involved in state agency COOP activities to ensure that the Division of Public Health can effectively maintain operating capability under circumstances in which 30% of the workforce may be absent. The intended purpose of this project is to develop more detailed COOP plans and to drill in areas such as delegation of authority and operating with non-essential functions. The workgroup will meet to review current WI COOP requirements and timetable for completion of Pandemic planning activities. They will also review CDC criteria and timeframes for completion of COOP planning and exercising. CDC requirements for Wisconsin's activities to ensure capability of necessary workforce will then be reviewed and incorporated into the DPH COOP plan. Finally, the workgroup will conduct a tabletop exercise to test DPH workforce capability regarding COOP

3. Antiviral Distribution:

The following key activities will be completed as part of this Priority Project:

Conduct follow-up Expert Panel meeting

The panel of stakeholders (representatives from pharmacies, hospitals, pharmaceutical distributors, clinics, local public health, the Division of Public Health, clinic administration, infection control and tribal entities met on January 24, 2008 to review the draft Antiviral Distribution Policy Recommendation that was developed based on the initial Expert Panel meeting held in October 2007. In addition to reviewing the policy recommendation, concerns or questions regarding the recommendation were addressed and remaining issues were identified.

Conduct small-scale/pilot of the Policy Recommendation

Since the policy recommendation regarding antiviral distribution is being developed for statewide use, a small-scale pilot program in two counties will help to identify local issues before the policy recommendation is shared with all other stakeholders.

Convene county/community based meeting of Local Health Officer and healthcare stakeholders

Local Public Health Officers have been charged with initiating meetings with their healthcare community and other stakeholders to introduce the policy recommendation and identify clinics that will serve as Treatment Centers (as recommended by the policy). While these discussions may take place over several months, each jurisdiction must convene at least one meeting by July 31, 2008. Treatment centers should be identified in each region and a list of treatment centers and contact persons should be provided to DPH by December 31st, 2008

4. Pandemic Triggers Exercise:

The pandemic planning group at the WI Division of Public Health has received numerous requests from local public health departments and other state agencies for a state-specific guide to actions and activities to be taken in response to the various stages of an influenza pandemic. Clarification of specific triggers and the corresponding state-level public health actions is needed so that local health departments and other state agencies can plan coordinated response activities. The current Wisconsin operational plan lacks the specificity needed for implementation of a pandemic influenza response. This project involves revision of the Wisconsin Pandemic Influenza Operational Plan to provide more specific direction regarding the triggers for activating major public health response activities in the event of an influenza pandemic.

The goal of the Wisconsin Pandemic Triggers exercise is to test the newly developed Wisconsin Pandemic Triggers Guidance through a tabletop exercise. The Triggers exercise may involve some of the following public health recommended actions:

- State EOC activation
- School closures
- Limiting public gatherings
- Closure of public and private locations
- Implementation of COOP plans
- Antiviral medications receipt and distribution

The exercise may involve triggers for many different situations based on what stage the pandemic is in, and where the pandemic influenza cases are identified. By completing the Wisconsin Pandemic Triggers exercise, we hope to provide a clearer picture of what actions state and local agencies will take in the event of a pandemic.

5. Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) Sentinel Clinician Expansion Project:

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health is undertaking an expansion of the Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) Sentinel Clinician Program. This will improve our ability to monitor influenza-like illness among specific population age groups, and will enhance our surveillance for unusual syndromes that may be indicative of pandemic influenza. The program expansion will attempt to reach more members of the pediatric and college-age student (18-25) age groups by including college health services and by increasing the number of pediatricians in the program.

6. Pandemic Countermeasures Exercise on Antiviral Distribution:

SNS Countermeasures for Pandemic Influenza has been identified as a priority project area for the state of Wisconsin. Included in the SNS Countermeasures is distribution planning for antiviral medications. Because the distribution of the state's allocation of PPE will likely follow the distribution of antivirals (AV), distribution of personal protective equipment is included in this priority project area. In a pandemic, both types of resources will be scarce and decisions regarding distribution will require ethical consideration. Thus, the ideal scenario is to have a well-developed plan in advance of a pandemic. The prioritization, distribution and allocation of antivirals and personal protective equipment need to be determined now because these will be crucial early countermeasures for containing outbreaks of pandemic influenza and preventing its spread, especially prior to the availability of a vaccine. Since federal supplies will be pushed to each project area without request, a plan dictating the use and distribution of such supplies needs to be developed at the state level. Several gaps were identified as a result of a tabletop exercise held in the summer of 2007 (PanDistro 2007), including the lack of appropriate representation at the discussions and exercise, and the lack of a well-defined plan.

The goal of the Wisconsin SNS Countermeasures for Pandemic Influenza exercise is to address the identified gaps from the PanDistro 2007 exercise and to test the new Antiviral Distribution Plan resulting from the State Expert Panel on Antivirals through a tabletop exercise. The objectives of this exercise will be directly related to the objectives of PanDistro 2007, and may include the following:

- Evaluate the capacity of the selected Receiving, Storing, and Staging Warehouse to receive shipments of pandemic countermeasures from the Strategic National Stockpile.
- Evaluate inventory management systems used for controlling pandemic countermeasures inventory.
- Evaluate the intra-state distribution of pandemic countermeasures from the Strategic National Stockpile.
- Evaluate the security plan for transportation of Strategic National Stockpile assets.

Pandemic Planning at the Department of Public Instruction:

The Division of Public Health has contracted with the Department of Public Instruction to hire a limited term employee to provide information and technical assistance to educators in preK-12 schools in collaboration with local health and emergency management departments. The goal of this project is to provide pandemic influenza information to educators across the state through conference presentations, meetings and exercises. Assistance will be provided to schools to modify any school preparedness plans to include pandemic influenza. DPI will develop a Wisconsin electronic toolkit of school pandemic flu planning resources.

For more information please contact: Sue Todey: todeywhitehouse@sbcglobal.net

Stay at Home Toolkit for Influenza:

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health is creating a Stay at Home Toolkit as a guide for families during a pandemic. The toolkit will focus on preventing the spread of influenza through key messages such as proper hand washing and cough etiquette, as well as the importance of social distancing during a pandemic. A section on preparation of an emergency kit will help families plan ahead for a pandemic. Finally, the toolkit will have a section on caring for someone with influenza. Information will be provided on basics of care, such as proper over-the-counter medication use, liquid intake and nutrition. Emphasis will be placed on signs of deterioration in the person's condition and phone numbers will be made available for help or more information in such situations, as well as mental health emergencies.