

## 155 - PANDEMIC DISEASE OUTBREAKS PROTOCOL

1. **The Superintendent of Schools will serve as the contact for questions related to communicable disease outbreaks as determined by the Medical Officer of Health.**

Teachers are required to report any possible cases, concerns or questions to their principals, and principals are required to report any possible cases, concerns or questions to the superintendent. This will ensure that any concerns or questions are dealt with in an efficient and informed fashion.

Under the Public Health Act it is the responsibility of a school to notify the Medical Officer of Health of any illness noted in epidemic form (Public Health Act Part 3 Communicable Diseases Section 26). It states: "A physician, a health practitioner, a teacher or a person in charge of an institution who knows of or has reason to suspect the existence of a communicable disease in epidemic form shall immediately notify the medical officer of health of the regional health authority by the fastest means possible."

2. **Our regional health authority**

Dr. Martin Lavoie  
Medical Officer of Health  
David Thompson Health Region  
(403) 341-2482  
DTHR Corporate Office: 1-800-752-8957  
Healthlink (24 hrs) 1-866-408-5465

The regional health authority contact will deal with questions related to pandemic disease outbreaks (SARS, Asian flu, swine flu).

3. **Monitoring and reporting system**

The regional health authority contact person and the superintendent will work together to develop a monitoring and reporting system for pandemic disease outbreaks.

4. **Ongoing monitoring of pandemic disease outbreaks (including SARS)**

The Superintendent (as designate) will monitor the rapidly changing updates about communicable disease outbreaks. Useful information is available from a number of sources, including the web sites listed below. In addition, your regional health authority contact person will provide useful and current information about communicable disease outbreaks.

<http://www.health.gov.ab.ca> (Health and Wellness, Government of Alberta)  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca> (Health Canada)

<http://www.cdc.gov> (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)  
<http://www.who.int> (World Health Organization)

## 5. Information to parents and staff

Parents and staff will be provided with relevant and appropriate information regarding communicable disease outbreaks within the division. Parents will be notified by school newsletters as to further sites for accessing information.

Jurisdiction communication about communicable diseases will be reviewed by the local regional health authority contact person, prior to providing it to parents and staff.

Parents and staff will be informed about any joint monitoring and reporting system put in place by your jurisdiction and the local regional health authority when a communicable disease outbreaks threat exists.

## 6. Travel

Nonessential travel will be cancelled to affected areas of communicable disease outbreaks.

Before any field trips are approved, directives are in place for review of communicable disease outbreaks conditions and outbreaks for the area. A review of the status of destinations will be done prior to departure. At minimum, the information provided by the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Health Canada will be reviewed. Web sites are outlined above (item 4).

Students and/or teachers planning travel to a country whereby they might be exposed to diseases found there and subsequently come back to the school setting and infect others should be encouraged to consult the Red Deer International Travel Clinic (or another such facility) in advance of their trip re: immunization and other protective measures to use to protect them against acquiring communicable diseases overseas.

## 7. Students or visitors coming from outside the jurisdiction

For staff, students or visitors coming to our schools from elsewhere, the current health and communicable disease outbreaks information about that area will be reviewed to determine if it is an affected area. The people referred to would include staff or students returning from field trips or personal holidays; exchange or international students or professionals; and students or staff transferring to your jurisdiction from another.

School principals will inform the Superintendent about students or visitors arriving from these areas. All incoming visits should be cleared through the Superintendent.

For staff or students coming to our jurisdiction from an affected area or known to have been exposed to a communicable disease outbreak, it is important for school

staff and parents to monitor the students' health for 10 days following their presence in the affected area. However, according to public health officials, these students may continue to attend school unless they develop symptoms.

#### **8. Know the symptoms of pandemic diseases**

Information is available at the regional health authority regarding symptoms of communicable disease outbreaks.

For example, symptoms of SARS are (a) a fever (measured temperature greater than 38 C, 100.4 F), sometimes associated with chills, muscle aches, headache, sore throat; and followed by (b) respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

#### **9. Reporting concerns immediately**

If a student or staff member who has been to an affected area or exposed to a communicable disease outbreaks develops any of the symptoms of the disease, staff will ensure that the individual remains where he or she is and report the suspected case immediately to your local regional health authority contact person. Tell the contact person that the person may the symptoms resembling those outlined in a communicable disease outbreak warning (e.g. SARS), so that arrangements can be made for a medical examination without risk of further exposure.

#### **10. Passing through affected areas such as airports and railway stations**

Wherever possible students and staff should avoid passing through affected areas, however, travel itineraries may dictate otherwise. In these cases, it is prudent to monitor for symptoms presented by any staff member or student who has been routed through an airport in an affected area, even though the risk may be arguably less than that from an extended period of time spent in the area.

Students and staff should be encouraged to wash their hands often and thoroughly with soap and warm water. Hand washing is the single most important method for preventing infection. It may be advisable to purchase waterless hand-wash agents (*i.e.* alcohol-based hand rub or ISO gel) for staff and student use.

#### **Definitions:**

SARS      Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

Reference: Public Health Act, Part 3, Communicable Diseases Section 26

Revised:    December 16, 2005