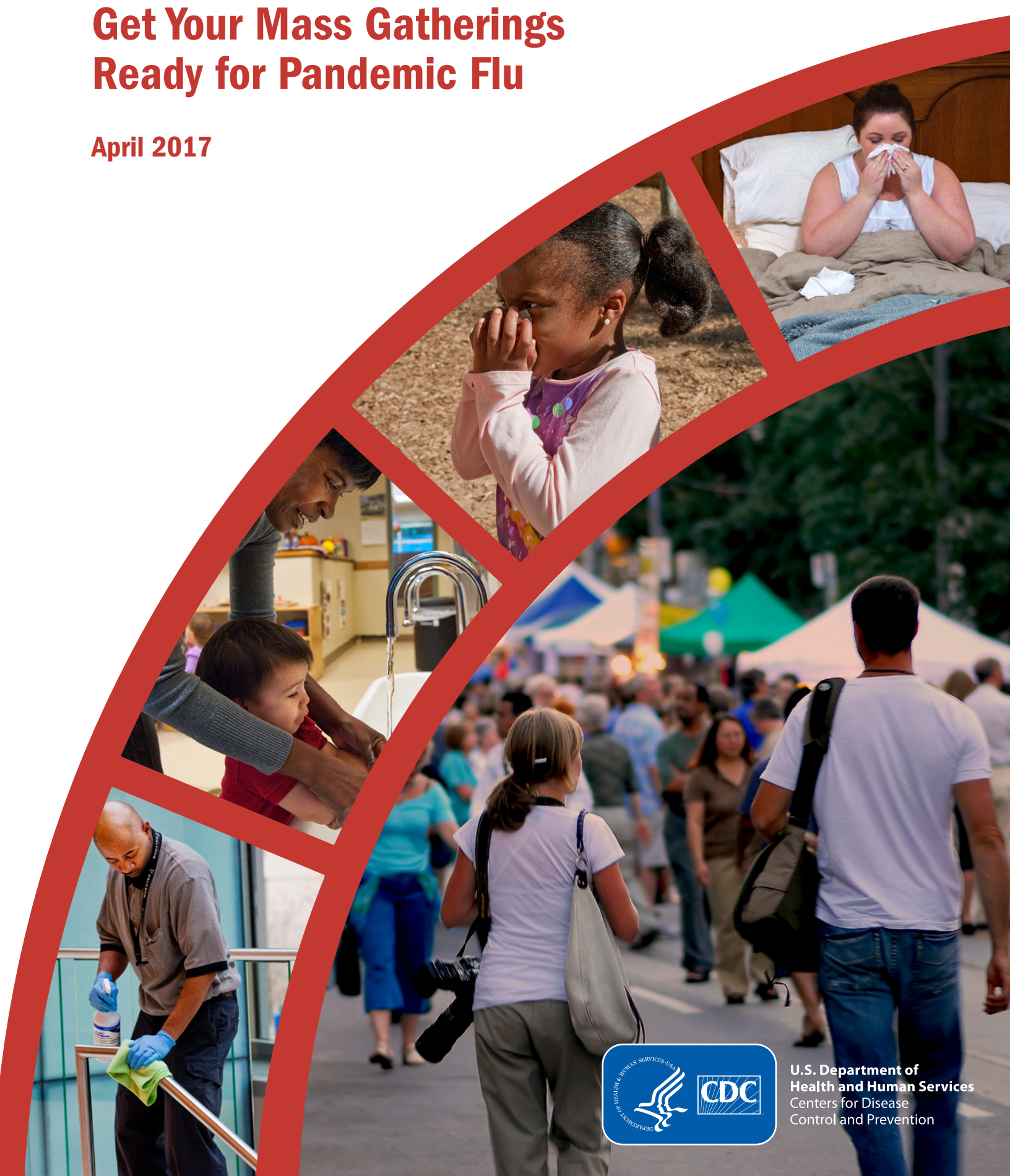


Get Your Mass Gatherings Ready for Pandemic Flu

April 2017



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

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Audience: Planners of mass gatherings (large events) responsible for planning for and responding to a flu pandemic and its recovery.

Mass gathering (large event): The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a mass gathering (large event) as a planned or unplanned event where the number of attendees is enough to strain the public health resources of a community, state, or nation.

Purpose: This guide provides information about **nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs)** and their use during a flu pandemic. NPIs are actions, apart from getting vaccinated and taking antiviral medications, that people and communities can take to help slow the spread of respiratory illnesses like pandemic flu. Use this guide to develop a new contingency plan or modify an existing emergency operations plan for pandemic flu that reflects considerations specific to your events, venues, and community.

ICON LEGEND



Tips



Readiness Resources



Questions

Keep Your Event Attendees and Communities Healthy By Planning For Pandemic Flu

Influenza can spread quickly among sick event workers and attendees during mass gatherings or large events like concerts, festivals, sporting events, or religious services. Seasonal influenza, also known as “the flu,” is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs (see **flu symptoms and complications**). Large events can create serious public health challenges because workers and attendees are often crowded together for periods of time, sharing personal space and common areas. Those traveling from events can spread flu to other communities and household members. These factors allow flu and other infectious diseases to spread easily.

Flu spreads mostly by droplets containing flu viruses traveling through the air (up to 6 feet) when a sick person coughs or sneezes. Less often, people might get flu by touching surfaces or objects with flu viruses on them and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months and older. Vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors’ visits, and missed work, and prevent flu-related hospitalizations. CDC also recommends that people practice **everyday preventive actions** (or personal NPIs) at all times to protect themselves and their community from flu and other respiratory infections (see Page 5).

An estimated 5–20% of people in the United States get sick with the flu each year, and thousands of people are hospitalized; these numbers may increase during a flu pandemic. Most large events require a committed group of workers. When workers are sick, event operations may be disrupted. *Flu pandemics are much less common but can occur at any time.* Will you and your planning team be ready to prevent the spread of pandemic flu among attendees and workers?

Many event venues have emergency operations plans that address a range of crises. Make sure your venues have a contingency plan that includes policies and procedures that are flexible and can align with future public health recommendations that may occur during a flu pandemic.

Pandemic flu is not seasonal flu

A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus that is different from seasonal flu viruses emerges and spreads quickly between people, causing illness worldwide. Most people will lack immunity to the pandemic flu virus. Pandemic flu can be more severe, causing more deaths than seasonal flu. Because it is a new virus, a vaccine may not be available right away. A pandemic could therefore overwhelm normal operations at large events. Read more about the important **differences between seasonal flu and pandemic flu**.

NPIs can help slow the spread of flu

When a new flu virus emerges, it can take up to 6 months before a **pandemic flu vaccine** is widely available. When a vaccine is not available, NPIs are the best way to help slow the spread of flu. They include personal, community, and environmental actions. These actions are most effective when used together.

As an event planner, you play a key role in flu readiness. Work closely with the management teams at your event venues to plan for and practice NPI actions. This will help you and your planning team respond more effectively when an actual emergency occurs. Safeguard the health of your workers, event attendees, and the community by having a contingency plan in place now that includes provisions for pandemic flu.





Personal NPIs are everyday preventive actions that can help keep people from getting and/or spreading flu. These actions include staying home when you are sick, covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and washing your hands often with soap and water.



Community NPIs are strategies that organizations and community leaders can use to help limit face-to-face contact. These strategies may include making sick-leave policies more flexible, promoting telework, avoiding close contact with others, and scheduling remote meetings.



Environmental NPIs are surface cleaning measures that remove germs from frequently touched surfaces and objects.



Planning for a flu pandemic is a wise investment.

A public health emergency, such as a severe pandemic, may require canceling or rescheduling events that bring people together. Talk with your insurance provider about coverage specific to pandemic flu and other public health emergencies.



CDC Pandemic Flu Checklist for Event Planners

<http://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/communication/pdf/pandemic-flu-checklist-event-planners.pdf>.

Take Action to Help Slow the Spread of Flu and Illness

CDC has developed recommended actions for preventing the spread of flu at large events. Promote and reinforce the practice of *everyday preventive actions* at all times. Plan for and educate workers about additional community NPI actions that may be recommended by public health officials, if a flu pandemic occurs.

Work closely with your event venues and local public health department before a pandemic occurs to establish a flexible contingency plan that includes actions to take during a mild, moderate, severe, very severe, or extreme pandemic. Be prepared to take actions that are appropriate for the **level of severity** of the local pandemic outbreak. The **Before, During,** and **After** sections of this guide offer suggested actions to help you plan for and implement these recommendations.

EVERYDAY PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

Everyone should always practice good personal health habits to help prevent flu.



Stay home when you are sick. Stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.



Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use at least a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.

NPIs RESERVED FOR A FLU PANDEMIC

Event planners should be prepared to take these additional actions, if recommended by public health officials.*



Be prepared to allow workers to stay home if someone in their house is sick.



Encourage attendees who are at high risk for flu complications to stay home.



Increase space between people at your events to at least 3 feet, as much as possible.



Reduce crowding among people at your events.



Modify, postpone, or cancel large events.

*These additional actions may be recommended for severe, very severe, or extreme flu pandemics.



Flu droplets can travel up to 6 feet when people cough or sneeze.

Keeping people at least 3 feet apart at large events can help lower the chances of them spreading the flu or becoming sick themselves. Consider seating attendees 2 seats apart to create more space. Also, consider planning “open-air” or outdoor events which may help reduce the spread of flu.



CDC Fact Sheet: Protect Yourself From Flu at a Large Public Event

<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/protect-yourself-from-flu-public-event-item4.pdf>

Note: The following sections include CDC's recommended actions for preventing the spread of pandemic flu and suggested strategies for implementing these recommendations.

Before a Flu Pandemic Occurs: Plan

Did you know organizers of large events should consider the healthcare system capacity in the host community should a flu outbreak occur because of the event?

A flu pandemic can last for several months. Public health officials may recommend additional community actions based on the **severity of the pandemic** that limit exposure, such as modifying, postponing, or canceling large events. These recommendations may be challenging to plan for and implement at your events. However, you may be asked to follow such recommendations for the safety and well-being of your workers, attendees, and the community.

As an event planner, you should be aware of the emergency operations plans for the venues in which your events will be held. Having a clear understanding of the contingency plans in place can help support normal event operations and protect the health of your workers and attendees. During your planning process, remember to engage key partners across both public and private sectors. When reviewing the plans, the specific details should be based on the severity of the pandemic. The details also should consider the size and duration of your events, type of people attending your events, complexity of your event operations, and type of on-site services and activities your events may offer attendees.

Establishing a relationship with your local public health department now can give you access to relevant information before and during a pandemic. Community-wide planning is essential to responding to and recovering from a flu pandemic. Find out if your local government has a private-public emergency planning group that meets regularly. Building strong alliances before a pandemic may provide you with the support and resources needed to respond effectively.

Review the existing emergency operations plans for your venues

- ✓ **Meet with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team at your venues.** Discuss the plans and determine how they may impact aspects of your events, such as personnel, security, services and activities, functions, and resources. Work with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team to make preparations for the key prevention strategies outlined in this guide. Develop a contingency plan that addresses various scenarios your events may face during a flu pandemic.
- ✓ **Establish relationships with key community partners and stakeholders.** When forming key relationships for your events, include the local public health department, community leaders, vendors, suppliers, hospitals, hotels, airlines, transportation companies, and law enforcement. Collaborate and coordinate with them on broader planning efforts. Clearly identify each partner's role, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. Review the pandemic flu plan for your community and participate in community-wide emergency preparedness activities.



Address key prevention strategies in your emergency operations plan

- ✓ **Promote the daily practice of everyday preventive actions at all times** (see Page 5). Use health messages and materials developed by credible public health sources, such as your local public health department or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). **Read more about everyday preventive actions.**
- ✓ **Provide flu-prevention supplies at your events.** Have supplies on hand for workers and attendees, such as soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, tissues, trash baskets, and disposable facemasks. Plan to have extra supplies on hand during a pandemic.
Note: Disposable facemasks should be kept on-site and used only when someone becomes sick at your events. Those who become sick should be given a clean disposable facemask to wear until they can leave.
- ✓ **Plan for worker absences.** Develop flexible pandemic flu attendance and sick-leave policies. Event workers may need to stay home when they are sick, caring for a sick household member, or caring for their children in the event of school dismissals. Identify critical job functions and positions and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training workers (similar to planning for holiday staffing).
- ✓ **Identify space that can be used to separate sick attendees (if possible).** Designate a space for attendees who may become sick and cannot leave the event immediately. Work with partners, such as local hospitals, to create a plan for treating attendees who do not live nearby. Include a plan for separating and caring for those with special needs.
- ✓ **Plan ways to increase space between workers to at least 3 feet or limit face-to-face contact between workers at your events.** Several ways to do this include offering workers the option to telework if they can perform their job duties off-site, using email, and conducting meetings by phone or video conferencing. Create staggered shifts for workers who support essential functions and services during events.
- ✓ **Plan ways to increase space between attendees to at least 3 feet and reduce crowding at your events.** Modifying seating arrangements and increasing space between attendees may reduce the spread of flu. If possible, create staggered event schedules, including arrival and departure times. Discourage attendees from crowding around bathrooms and food stations.
- ✓ **Develop a risk-assessment and risk-management process for your events.** Work closely with local public health officials to develop a contingency plan if assessing and managing risks among event workers and attendees is needed (for example, providing portable hand-washing or hand-sanitizer stations).
- ✓ **Develop flexible refund policies for attendees.** Create refund policies that allow attendees the flexibility to stay home when they are sick, caring for sick household members, or at high risk for flu complications.
- ✓ **Identify actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel events.** Work closely with local public health officials to assess local capacities in the area, such as healthcare systems and law enforcement, which can impact the decision to postpone or cancel your events. If possible, plan alternative ways for attendees to enjoy the events by television, radio, or online.
Note: Talk with your insurance provider about coverage specific to pandemic flu and other public health emergencies.



Communicate about pandemic flu and NPIs

✓ **Update your emergency communication plan for distributing timely and accurate information.**

Identify everyone in your chain of communication (for example, event workers, suppliers, vendors, and key community partners and stakeholders) and establish systems for sharing information with them. Maintain up-to-date contact information for everyone in the chain of communication. Identify platforms, such as a hotline, automated text messaging, and a website to help disseminate information.

✓ **Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating pandemic flu information to event workers and attendees.** Information you share should be easily understood by everyone attending the events. Learn more about reaching people of diverse languages and cultures by visiting: www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Audience/index.html. You also can learn more about communicating to workers in a crisis at: www.ready.gov/business/implementation/crisis



Encourage event workers to plan for a flu pandemic.

Educating workers about emergency care and response planning now can help them make informed decisions about their health and the health of others during a pandemic. Provide resources and tools, such as CDC's Individuals and Households Planning Guide <https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-ind-house.pdf>



WHO: Communicable Disease Alert and Response for Mass Gatherings

http://www.who.int/csr/Mass_gatherings2.pdf

During a Flu Pandemic: Take Action

Did you know that during a flu pandemic, public health officials may provide guidance to event planners?

It is important to meet regularly with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team for your venues during a pandemic to accurately assess, manage, and communicate possible risks. Public health officials may provide event planners with communication tools to promote everyday preventive actions, help conduct risk assessments in preparation for events, and assist with implementing measures to mitigate the spread of flu during events. Early action to slow the spread of flu will help keep event workers, attendees, and the community healthy.

Put your emergency operations and communication plans into action

- ✓ **Stay informed about the local flu situation.** Get up-to-date information about local flu activity from public health officials. Be aware of temporary school dismissals in your area because these may affect event workers.
Note: Early in the pandemic, local public health officials may recommend schools be dismissed temporarily to allow time to gather information about how fast and severe the flu virus is spreading in your community. Temporarily dismissing schools also can help slow the spread of flu.
- ✓ **Implement NPI actions to protect event workers and attendees** (see Page 5). Meet with your emergency operations coordinator or planning team to discuss plans for starting NPI actions, such as increasing space to at least 3 feet between people. Again, work closely with your local public health department when starting NPIs reserved for flu pandemics. Discuss how these actions will impact your events.
Note: Using multiple NPIs at the same time is more effective.
- ✓ **Implement your risk-assessment and risk-management plan.** Work closely with local public health officials and healthcare partners to conduct health risk assessments at your events, if warranted by the severity of the pandemic.
Note: When assessing risks, think about who is likely to attend your events. Also, identify places where people may gather in crowds or have face-to-face contact at the venues.

Communicate frequently with those in your communication chain

- ✓ **Update key community partners and stakeholders regularly.** Share information about how you and the emergency operations coordinator or planning team for the venues are responding to the pandemic.
- ✓ **Provide flu-prevention supplies and distribute health messages and materials to workers and attendees.** Continue to promote **everyday preventive actions** (see Page 5). Ensure that your events have supplies, such as tissues, trash baskets, disposable facemasks, and at least a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer, for workers and attendees. Clean frequently-touched surfaces and objects with regular soap and water or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved products. Offer resources that provide reliable pandemic flu information. Address the potential fear and anxiety that may result from rumors or misinformation. For pandemic flu health messages and materials, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/tools-resources/educational-materials.html>
Note: Messages, materials, and resources should be culturally appropriate.
- ✓ **Encourage workers and attendees who are at high risk for flu complications to stay home from events.** People in high-risk groups should consult with their healthcare provider about attending large events. Consider providing refunds to attendees who are unable to attend because they are at high risk and/or provide information on alternate viewing options. Learn who may be at high risk for flu complications at: www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm

Take administrative action (as needed) to maintain operations

- ✓ **Implement flexible attendance and sick-leave policies (if possible).** Continue to encourage workers to stay home if they are sick or caring for a sick household member. Notify workers of when you plan to implement pandemic flu leave policies. Provide instructions about how and when to safely return to work.

*Note: If a worker gets sick with **flu symptoms**, they should stay home to lower their chances of spreading illness to others. CDC recommends they stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines, such as acetaminophen. This will help ensure their fever is truly gone, and they are past the point of being contagious. People with weakened immune systems may need to stay home longer.*

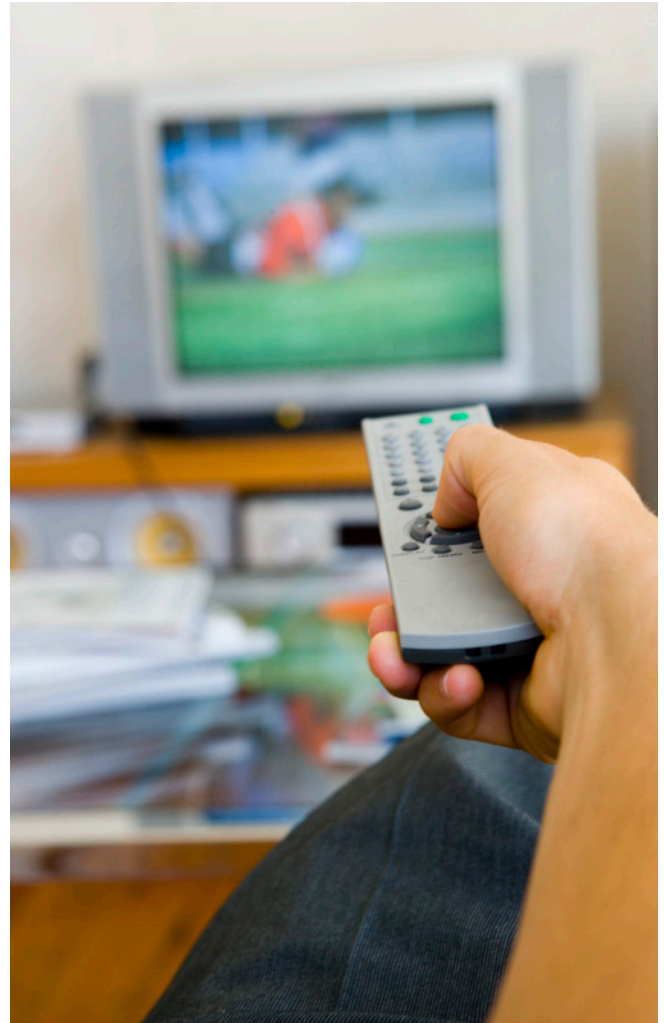
- ✓ **Separate those who become sick at your workplace from those who are well.** Send sick workers home immediately. If someone becomes sick at your workplace, separate them from others (particularly from those who are at high risk for flu complications) as soon as possible. Provide them with clean disposable facemasks to wear until they can leave. Work with the local public health department and nearby hospitals to care for those who become sick. If needed, arrange transportation for workers and others who need emergency care. Read more about caring for those sick with the flu at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/caring-for-someone.htm>

*Note: Providing sick workers with facemasks does **not** replace the need to encourage them to go home and stay home when they are sick. Facemasks may be in short supply during a flu pandemic.*



Determine the need to postpone or cancel your events

- ✓ **Put into action strategies for postponing or canceling your events.** Work closely with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team for your venues and local public health officials to determine if you need to postpone or cancel your events. Immediately alert event workers and attendees if your event(s) has been postponed or canceled, and inform them of your pandemic flu (or emergency) refund policy and re-ticketing options.
- ✓ **Update everyone in your communication chain about when your events will occur if postponed or canceled.** Let attendees know if and when new tickets can be obtained.



Communicate only accurate, up-to-date information.

Rumors and misinformation may contribute to confusion and fear. Address misinformation among workers by staying informed about the flu situation in your local community.



Connect to *city* and *county* public health officials

<http://www.naccho.org/about/LHD/index.cfm>

Connect to *state* and *territorial* public health officials

<http://www.astho.org/Directory/>

After a Flu Pandemic Has Ended: Follow Up

Did you know that large events can be used to raise awareness and promote healthy behaviors among attendees and within the community?

Remember, a flu pandemic can last for several months. If your events are not cancelled, implement programs and campaigns to further educate attendees about the importance of practicing healthy behaviors. When public health officials determine that a flu pandemic has ended, work with them to identify criteria for phasing out and ending NPI actions at your events. The criteria should be based on reduced flu severity or a slowing of the outbreak in your local area. If your events were cancelled, work with your venues to reschedule your events.

Evaluate the effectiveness of your emergency operations and communication plans

- ✓ **Meet with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team for your venues to discuss and note lessons learned.** Gather feedback from event workers, attendees (if possible), and key community partners and stakeholders to improve plans. Identify any gaps in the plans and any needs you may have for additional resources.
- ✓ **Maintain and expand your planning team.** Look for ways to expand community partnerships. Identify agencies or partners needed to help you prepare for pandemic flu, and make an effort to add them to your planning team.
- ✓ **Revisit your risk-assessment and risk-management plan.** Determine ways to improve planning and implementation processes.
- ✓ **Participate in community-wide emergency preparedness activities.**

Congratulations on planning for a flu pandemic

A flu pandemic can occur at any time, and having a plan in place is essential. A contingency or emergency operations plan for pandemic flu will help protect the health and safety of event workers, attendees, and your community. Coordinate your planning activities with local public health officials and key community partners and stakeholders to help organize safe events.



Meet with your emergency operations coordinator or planning team within 30 days after a flu pandemic ends.

Debrief with your team and key community partners and stakeholders while they still remember events.



Community Mitigation Guidelines to Prevent Pandemic Influenza—United States, 2017

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.rr6601a1>



Questions?

Help and planning resources are just a click away. Visit www.cdc.gov/npi and www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic

Readiness Resources

Pandemic Flu Planning Resources

CDC Pandemic Flu Planning Tools and Resources

- Read more about the important differences between seasonal flu and pandemic flu
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/basics/about.html>
- First Hours: Key Websites and Online Resources <http://emergency.cdc.gov/firsthours/resources/websites.asp>
- Visit www.cdc.gov/npi for the latest information and resources about nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs)
- Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/index.htm> for the latest information and resources about pandemic flu
- Learn who may be at high risk for flu complications http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm
- Community Mitigation Guidelines to Prevent Pandemic Influenza—United States, 2017
<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.rr6601a1>
- Reaching People of Diverse Languages and Cultures with Flu Communications
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Audience/index.html>
- Creating Easy-to-understand Materials http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply_Put.pdf

CDC Pandemic Flu NPI Planning Guides

- Get Ready for Pandemic Flu: Educational Settings
<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-ed-set.pdf>
- Get Ready for Pandemic Flu: Workplace Settings
<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-work-set.pdf>
- Get Ready for Pandemic Flu: Individuals and Households
<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-ind-house.pdf>
- Get Ready for Pandemic Flu: Community- and Faith-Based Organizations Serving Vulnerable Populations
<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-com-faith-org-serv-vul-pop.pdf>
- Get Ready for Pandemic Flu: Health Communicators
<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/gr-pan-flu-health-com.pdf>

CDC Checklists

- Pandemic Flu Checklist for Event Planners
<http://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/communication/index.html>

CDC Factsheets

- Protect Yourself from Flu at a Large Public Event
<http://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/pdf/protect-yourself-from-flu-public-event-item4.pdf>

CDC Trainings

- NPI 101—An Introduction to Nonpharmaceutical Interventions for Pandemic Flu
<http://cdc.train.org/DesktopModules/eLearning/CourseDetails/CourseDetailsForm.aspx?courseId=1051645>
- Estimate potential days of work loss resulting from pandemic flu at Flu Work Loss 1.0
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/tools/fluworkloss.htm>

Additional Planning Information

- WHO Communicable Disease Alert and Response for Mass Gatherings
http://www.who.int/csr/Mass_gatherings2.pdf

Connecting with Public Health Agencies

- Connect to city and county public health officials for local information <http://www.naccho.org/about/LHD/index.cfm>
- Connect to state and territorial public health officials for statewide information <http://www.astho.org/Directory/>

Communicating about Pandemic Flu

- Culture, Language, and Health Literacy <http://www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence/index.html>
See “Essential Health Literacy Tools” on the right side navigation toolbar.
- Developing Materials for Clear Communication <http://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/>

Seasonal Flu Planning Resources

CDC Seasonal Flu Planning Tools and Resources

- Visit www.cdc.gov/flu for the latest information and resources about seasonal flu
- Summary of Weekly Flu View <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/summary.htm>
- Flu View Portal <http://gis.cdc.gov/grasp/fluview/fluportaldashboard.html>

CDC Fact Sheets

- Hand-washing: A Corporate Activity—Improving Health and Increasing Productivity (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/pdf/hygiene/hwcorporate.pdf>

CDC Posters

- Do Your Part to Slow the Spread of Germs <http://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/communication/pdf/do-your-part-slow-spread-germs-poster.pdf>

Additional Planning Information

- Flu Near You <https://flunearyou.org/>

Suggested Citation:

Get Your Mass Gatherings Ready for Pandemic Flu, 2017. Atlanta, GA: Community Interventions for Infection Control Unit, Division of Global Migration and Quarantine, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 2017.