



## Pandemic Flu Planning State of Colorado Human Resources

The Department of Personnel and Administration and the HR Directors of Colorado State agencies are working with other local and federal emergency planning groups to ensure we are prepared in the event of a flu pandemic. Planning and preparation is already underway and we want to tell you how you can participate.

### **How is the State of Colorado preparing for a pandemic?**

The CDPHE Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (CDPHE-EPRS), the Colorado Division of Emergency Management (CDEM) in the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) established Colorado's Interagency Coordinating Committee ("IICC") in October 2005, with the goal of interagency planning and emergency preparedness for avian and pandemic influenza in Colorado. Representatives from all partner agencies responsible for state Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) under the National Response Plan were recruited and asked to commit staff and resources to pandemic influenza preparedness planning. On December 1, 2005, Colorado hosted the state's first full-day pandemic influenza planning conference with more than 125 attendees representing all emergency support functions. And, on March 24, 2006, the Governor and CDPHE hosted Colorado's Pandemic Readiness and Emergency Planning Conference, in conjunction with federal officials, with more than 1,100 attendees.

The IICC has continued to meet regularly for pandemic influenza planning with the CDPHE, CDEM, and CDA remaining the lead agencies. Membership has expanded to include:

- Governor's Office
- Local and public health agencies
- Colorado State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Veterinary Medical Foundation
- Colorado Division of Mental Health
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs
- Colorado Department of Human Services
- Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies
- Colorado Department of Personnel and Administration
- Colorado Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Colorado Council of Churches
- Numerous private sector businesses
- Local fire and emergency medical agencies
- American Red Cross Mile High Chapter
- Colorado Coroner's Association

- Colorado Department of Transportation
- City and county public safety agencies
- Colorado State Patrol
- Colorado National Guard
- Colorado Department of Corrections
- READYColorado
- Public information officers from key state, other public, and private agencies

Subcommittees have been formed with members of the IICC and other external partners. The subcommittees include: Social Distancing Support, Human Resources and Employee Support, Exercises, PPE Training, Community Outreach and Public Information, Communications, Business, and Animal Health. Additional subcommittees continue to be added as the need arises.

### **What are the State’s human resources directors doing?**

The state HR directors are meeting every two weeks to develop recommendations for the Governor and the State Personnel Director regarding appropriately flexible personnel system policies to be implemented in a declared pandemic emergency. These policies initially will address the unique challenges of a pandemic and later will be linked to planning for any type of disaster, natural or man-made. The policies will cover a variety of subjects based on guidance from national and local experts, including:

- ▶ Compensation and paid leave.
- ▶ Flexplace and flextime work arrangements.
- ▶ Preventing influenza spread at the worksite (e.g., hygiene protocols, education and distancing employees who show signs of illness).
- ▶ Restricting travel to affected geographic areas and addressing the movement of employees out of affected areas at the start, or back into affected areas at the end.

HR directors also are developing preparedness checklists for state agencies based on information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which recommends that employers plan for the impact of a pandemic on employees and customers by doing the following:

- ▶ Implement guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact among employees and between employees and customers.
- ▶ Encourage and track annual influenza vaccination for employees.
- ▶ Evaluate employee access to and availability of healthcare services during a pandemic and improve services as needed.
- ▶ Evaluate employee access to and availability of mental health and social services during a pandemic, and improve services as needed.
- ▶ Identify employees and key customers with special needs, and incorporate the requirements of such persons into the preparedness plan.

In addition, the State Controller is engaged in planning to ensure continuity of the payroll system. All of these activities and policies are being coordinated with the State's Continuity of Operations Plans as part of planning for all types of disaster that might occur.

## **How You Can Help - Personal Preparation**

### **Educate yourself – understand fact versus fiction.**

There is no pandemic flu anywhere in the world. To be considered a pandemic, a disease would have to spread easily from person to person in more than one country. There have been some deaths from avian flu in other parts of the world. But, the evidence from those countries tells scientists that the disease is not easy to get. The disease does not pass from person to person under most circumstances.

### **What might a pandemic look like for our workforce?**

Up to 40 percent of state employees could be unable to report to work during the peak of a severe pandemic. If it becomes necessary to use public health measures such as closing schools, absenteeism among state employees is likely to increase. A pandemic outbreak can last about 6 to 8 weeks, and multiple waves of illness could occur with each wave lasting 2 to 3 months.

### **Get the facts.**

Don't be paralyzed with fear, don't ignore the challenge, and don't pass along whatever story you hear without knowing the facts. Use reliable sources such as CDC or CDPHE to get your information. Then, by all means, talk about how to be well prepared with everyone you know.

### **Be prepared.**

According to the federal government, state and local communities will be on their own. Federal assistance will be limited to stockpiles of certain medications strategically located around the nation. The Governor's Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee is developing its recommendations for the use of limited supplies. It is likely that the medications will be used primarily for treating emergency responders (e.g., health care, police, and rescue).

To be prepared for such a significant challenge, it is important for every family to have a workable, realistic, and effective emergency management plan. In an emergency, state employees will be concerned with personal safety and the welfare of their families. Schools may be closed, increasing the childcare needs of those employees. Transportation services may be disrupted making it hard to travel to work, the store, or to care for loved ones who are far away. The Governor and agency leaders understand that if an employee or the employee's family members become ill, accessing health care services will be a priority, and it will result in absences from work.

*The US Department of Health and Human Services Guide for Individuals and Families* has information that all employees are strongly encouraged to follow. Some highlights of the guide, available at [www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab3.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab3.html), include:

- ▶ Stock a supply of water and food. Store foods that are nonperishable, easy to prepare, and require little water.
- ▶ Have extra prescription drugs as well as nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand.
- ▶ Make good hygiene a habit -- wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; don't use your hands.
- ▶ Stay at home if you are sick.
- ▶ Create a family emergency health plan that contains important information about family members' past and current medical conditions, allergies, and blood types.
- ▶ Develop an emergency contact list with the names/phone numbers of emergency contacts, health care providers, schools, etc. Discuss where to meet if your family is separated.
- ▶ Consider how to assist elderly or disabled family members or neighbors.

Similar recommendations are available at READYColorado, with guides to making your own home emergency kits and communications plan.

A flu pandemic is not imminent, but we need to start preparing. How well we handle a pandemic situation is up to all of us.

Important links to bookmark:

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

[www.cdphe.state.co.us](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us)

[www.readycolorado.com](http://www.readycolorado.com)