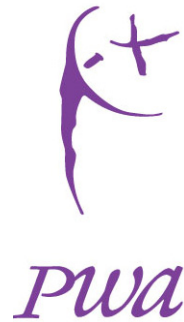


Toronto People With AIDS Foundation

H1N1 Communication #1



What Is Pandemic Flu?

A “pandemic” is a worldwide epidemic in which many people become sick and some may die. Certain types of flu viruses can spread quickly to most countries in the world and cause a flu pandemic. Unlike the seasonal flu that occurs every winter in Canada, pandemic flu can occur at any time of year.

What Are the Symptoms?

Pandemic flu is likely to cause the same symptoms as seasonal flu. The symptoms may be more severe because nobody will have any immunity or protection against that particular virus. Symptoms include fever, headache, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Children can also have symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

How is PWA Responding?

PWA recognizes that during an influenza pandemic, PWA’s ability to meet our obligations to our clients, and our ability to protect our employees and volunteers will be affected. In this instance appropriate pandemic planning can reduce the number of people infected, the amount of illness, the anxiety and uncertainty and the extent of socio-economic disruption. As a result, PWA has developed a Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan.

In developing this plan, we have worked with information from PARN (Your Community AIDS Resource Network), the City of Toronto, The Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care and other community partners and organizations.

PWA’s planning has been based on some general key assumptions including:

1. There may be a significant absentee rate among staff and volunteers due to illness and care- giving roles.
2. There also may be significant loss of people and specific expertise/skill sets within other organizations and infrastructure that PWA depends on (i.e. suppliers, government agencies, referral agencies).
3. Communication to staff, volunteers, Board members and clients will be critical, not just about PWA’s activities but about relevant health information and recommendations.
4. There may be limited access to critical infrastructure health and medical services for staff, volunteers and clients.

In addition, it’s important to recognize that a pandemic will have issues that are unique to AIDS service organizations including:

- many infection control strategies may be perceived as stigmatizing for people living with HIV/AIDS,
- as always, protecting the privacy and confidentiality of PHA’s will be imperative and may be complicated by adjustments in the health care sector during an influenza epidemic,

- there may be additional, complex needs providing effective support and resources to PHA's who may be isolated, at home, lacking access to health care or those who require additional medications etc.,
- Clients, staff and volunteers may experience an increase in feelings of fear, anxiety and isolation during an influenza pandemic.

The purpose of PWA's Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan is to maximize PWA's ability to continue offering programs and services to clients while supporting the health, safety and well being of employees and volunteers.

Specifically, during an Influenza pandemic, PWA staff has a goal of ***“Providing exceptional client services while supporting the health and well-being of staff, clients and volunteer.”***

What we hope to see as a result of a successful plan includes: no outbreak of influenza among staff, clients, volunteers; clients will receive the same level of services without disruptions (if possible); on each visit, clients should have the usual welcoming experience; clients' well-being are maintained; staff anxieties are reduced; teamwork is outstanding; staff, clients and volunteers feel trust, confidence and relief; appropriate support to other agencies is provided.

In order to meet this goal, staff has identified key things that would need to be in place and demonstrated including: flexibility, adequate staffing, strong partnerships, training and cross training, communication, infection control equipment and procedures, clear priorities, regular check-ins during declared pandemic, periodic review of plan and procedures before and during a declared pandemic, self-care and awareness, sensitivity to the impact of a declared pandemic on clients, staff, volunteers and the general public, as well as on financial support (flexibility of funders).

PWA is committed to being prepared by planning and responding effectively to meet the goals outlined above in relation to an influenza pandemic. In the coming weeks, PWA will continue to monitor, respond and provide important information about H1N1 and any possible influenza pandemic.

The additional key attachments provide further factual information about H1N1, how to prevent catching it, what to watch for, how to respond as well as where to get the H1N1 flu shot. They are also available on our website.

Attachments

H1N1 Fact Sheet – MOHLTC (Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care)

H1N1 Fact Sheet – MOHLTC (French)

H1N1 Fact Sheet – MOHLTC (Spanish)

Fact Sheets in a total of 19 languages can be found at:

http://www.toronto.ca/health/cdc/h1n1/multilingual_resources.htm

City of Toronto H1N1 Flu Shot Clinic Schedule