I. PURPOSE:
The City of Suffolk is committed to the health and safety of its employees, contractors and workplace visitors and is committed to minimizing the risk of exposure and transmission of pandemic influenza virus through the workplace. The City of Suffolk will make all reasonable efforts to provide essential services to residents on an uninterrupted basis during a pandemic influenza outbreak. During a pandemic outbreak, employees will be expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work and perform essential duties. This policy will help to prepare the City of Suffolk to properly handle infection control, to establish communication strategies and to provide needed support services to employees during a pandemic outbreak.

II. DEFINITIONS:
A. **Influenza** is commonly known as “the flu” and is a highly contagious and common respiratory illness (an infection of the lungs and airways) caused by a virus. It is transmitted from person to person in one of two ways: (a) from droplets that enter your body through the eyes, nose or mouth when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks, or (b) from indirect contact when a person’s hands become contaminated with the virus by touching contaminated objects and the person subsequently touches his eyes, nose or mouth or eats food without washing his hands first.

B. **Pandemic Influenza** occurs when there is an abrupt and major change in the structure of the influenza virus and infection reaches global proportions. Since people have no immunity to the completely new strain, the virus can spread very quickly and outbreaks can occur in many countries.

C. **Quarantine** The physical separation, including confinement or restriction of movement, of an individual or individuals who are present within an affected area or who are known to have been exposed, or may reasonably be suspected to have been exposed, to a communicable disease of public health threat and who do not yet show signs or symptoms of infection with the communicable disease of public health threat in order to prevent or limit the transmission of the communicable disease of public health threat to unexposed and uninfected individuals.

D. **Isolation** The physical separation, including confinement or restriction of movement, of an individual or individuals who are infected with or are reasonably suspected to be infected with a communicable disease of public health threat in order to prevent or limit the transmission of the communicable disease of public health threat to uninfected and unexposed individuals.

E. **Supervisor** means an individual having authority, on behalf of the city, to assign, direct and discipline other assigned employees.

F. **Employees** includes all full-time, part-time, temporary and seasonal employees on the City of Suffolk payroll.

H. **City of Suffolk Work sites** include any work site to which employees have been assigned for the purpose of conducting City of Suffolk business and includes all land, buildings, facilities, mobile equipment and vehicles either owned, leased or otherwise controlled by the City of Suffolk.
I. **Essential Services** are those City of Suffolk services critical to the protection of life and property. The loss of any of these essential services would be intolerable in that they could affect the basics of life or safety and the community could not function without such services. Essential services shall be identified in each department and shall be distinguished from services that are determined to be merely desirable or valued services.

III. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. **Department Directors:**

1. Have the ultimate responsibility to provide the essential services within their departments to the best of their ability to do so.
2. Require that all supervisors and employees in the departments under their control adhere to the responsibilities and procedures as identified in this policy.
3. Assume the supervisor’s responsibilities and accountabilities in regard to all employees that are directly reporting to them.
4. Shall report daily to Human Resources those employees that report out sick due to the flu or flu-like symptoms or to care for family members with the flu or flu-like symptoms.

B. **Supervisors shall:**

1. Have responsibility to provide the essential services to the best of their ability to do so.
2. Consult with the Human Resources Department to provide consistent application of this policy and procedures.
3. Require all employees in their departments to adhere to the responsibilities and procedures as identified in this policy.
4. Require departmental timekeepers (or backup timekeepers) to continue to enter timesheet details for employees to ensure that employees can continue to receive pay checks during any pandemic influenza emergency.
5. Assist in educating employees (and customers accessing their department) on the required protective strategies available to prevent and control the risk of infection (as per appendices of this policy). Supervisors shall also require employees and customers to follow the attached guidelines to prevent risk of infection.
6. Ensure employees are aware of and require them to follow the procedures for reporting absences.

C. **Employees shall:**

1. Develop personal plans so they can manage their responsibilities at home, plan on how to care for their families and be able to come to work.
2. Follow infection prevention and transmission control guidelines as applicable to their work situation (appendices 1 and 2).
3. Identify to their supervisor immediately any potential risks to infection transmission and assist in corrective actions to minimize these risks.

D. **Department of Capital Programs/ Division of General Services shall:**

1. Ensure that there are sufficient amounts of appropriate cleaning supplies.
2. Ensure General Services employees are wearing the proper personal protective clothing (i.e. disposable gloves) when cleaning.
3. Ensure their employees and the contracted janitorial staffs are knowledgeable and require them to follow appropriate infection control procedures while performing their job duties.

E. **Department of Media and Community Relations shall:**
   1. Develop strategies for effective methods of establishing communication with appropriate groups in order to ensure accurate and timely information is disseminated.
   2. Partner with the Suffolk Health Department to develop informational materials for distribution to employees, supervisors and City of Suffolk residents.

F. **Department of Human Resources/ Division of Risk Management shall:**
   1. Recommend amendments and updates to this policy and procedures as may be required on a periodic basis to respond to current circumstances and evolving needs.
   2. Provide information about this policy to supervisors and employees so that they are aware of their responsibilities and the procedures as identified in this policy. Attend departmental staff meetings and distribute information to staff as required.
   3. Provide advice and interpretation of this policy to department heads and supervisors.
   4. Consult with supervisors to ensure consistent application of this policy.

G. **City of Suffolk Health Department shall:**
   1. Provide information to the City of Suffolk, prior to and during a pandemic influenza outbreak regarding:
      - Pandemic influenza and infection prevention and control strategies
      - Modes of transmission of pandemic influenza
      - Signs and symptoms of pandemic influenza
      - Personal protection methods
      - Travel guidelines
      - Social distancing guidelines
   2. Monitor both seasonal and pandemic influenza situations.
   3. Provide advice to departments on quarantine and isolation situations.

H. **Department of Human Resources/ Division of Benefits:**
   1. Follow up, as needed, with exposed or ill employees to explore the severity of exposure.
   2. Review any available medical information, as needed, when an employee has been cleared for return to work and/or review the symptoms of the employee and advise departments and employees on safe return to work.

I. **Emergency Management shall:**
   1. Activate the Emergency Operation Center as needed.
   2. Activate the City of Suffolk’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) as needed.

J. **Department of Human Resources/ Division of Information Technology shall:**
   1. Be prepared to execute appropriate emergency plans and actions; implement expanded Internet capabilities with key suppliers, business partners and customers that may be unwilling or unable to provide services in person during a pandemic event.
   2. Determine and communicate the preferred IT-enabled secure telecommuting and Remote Access Infrastructure.
3. Provide technical support that enables crisis communications as necessary. This will be via the Internet, Intranet and/or Voice services.

4. Provide guidance on preferred methods of obtaining and securing alternative communication technologies if primary lines of communication are disrupted.

5. Provide specialized teleconferencing and/or video link technologies as required to support disparate, remote operations.

6. Provide preferred method for secure access to City of Suffolk information resources.

7. Provide infrastructure support for preferred resources or tools to support a centralized or decentralized crisis management.

IV. PROCEDURES:

A. Infection Control - The most common route of pandemic influenza is droplet transmission and indirect contact from person-to-person. Scrupulous attention to hand hygiene and containment of respiratory secretions produced by coughing and sneezing will be essential in reducing the transmission of pandemic influenza. Key actions in a pandemic situation include:
   • Education of employees and customers about transmission and prevention of pandemic influenza with information that is understandable and applicable to their particular situation
   • Prompt identification of employees or customers with pandemic influenza symptoms
   • Restriction of ill employees or customers from the workplace

B. Health and Safety - The requirements for personal protective equipment will be based on Suffolk Health Department assessments. Appropriate masks to prevent the transmission of droplet contact shall be provided as required. As practical, barriers or other personal distancing measures will be taken to reduce close physical contact between employees and the public.

C. Alcohol Dispensers or Hand Sanitizers – Hand washing is the most effective method to control the spread of pandemic influenza. When necessary hand sanitizers should be made available in employee work areas as well as in areas that the public or customers utilize. People will be encouraged to use these pump foam dispensers whenever they are entering any public or shared workspace in order to control the transmission of any virus.

D. Vaccinations - It is anticipated that vaccine may not be readily available in the early stages of a pandemic; and when it does become available, it may initially be in a very limited supply. Therefore, pandemic influenza vaccine will need to be administered on a restricted and pre-established priority basis. The priority will initially be to those employees who are directly involved in the delivery of essential services. After these employees have been immunized, and when additional vaccine is available, then other employees will receive vaccine based upon a pre-established priority setting process.

E. Communications and Education of Employees - Infection control measures need to be implemented long before the population is at risk and then need to be reinforced as the situation manifests itself. The Department of Media and Community Relations, in consultation with the Suffolk Health Department, will coordinate and distribute pandemic-related information in order to provide consistent and timely messages to employees. Information will be distributed through such means as pamphlets and posters in strategic locations, intranet, Internet, e-mails and other means.
Information also will be posted on the City of Suffolk’s intranet and Internet sites to allow employees to access related information, forms and tips on how they can protect themselves and their family during a pandemic.

External strategies and networks shall be required between Human Resources, Media and Community Relations and the Suffolk Health Department to ensure that information and advice that is provided to City of Suffolk employees is consistent with information being provided to the general public.

Communication strategies and networks with other external groups (such as the public, customers, suppliers, media, local employers and other municipalities) shall be the responsibility of Media and Community Relations.

F. **City of Suffolk Departments/Human Resource Priorities** - City of Suffolk departments are responsible for ensuring that they have the optimum number of personnel available and trained to perform essential services. To do so, they will employ the following strategies in order of priority:

1. Suspend normal employee training programs.
2. Suspend vacations, leaves and any other planned absences of employees involved in essential services.
3. Re-deploy employees from desirable and valued function to essential and necessary valued functions.
4. Authorize overtime for employees in situations where re-deployment of other skilled employees is not an option due to the complexity of the essential task.
5. Use surplus employees from other City of Suffolk departments.
6. Rehire recently retired employees.
7. Where possible, use volunteers.
8. Recruit new employees.

The Human Resources Department will coordinate the application of strategies 5 to 8 above.

G. **Canceling Vacations and Leaves** - If a public health emergency is declared, vacation leaves and planned absences (e.g. training or conferences) for many City of Suffolk employees will be canceled until further notice. The priority for the City of Suffolk will be to ensure continued delivery of essential services, and reduced manpower may hamper those efforts.

H. **Payroll and Benefits Services** - It is recognized that the accurate and timely provision of employees’ paychecks and the continuance of their health insurance coverage is an essential service that must continue during a pandemic influenza emergency. Health care, dental and life insurance claims will continue to be submitted as they are normally. The most significant issue will be the need for accurate record keeping and timesheet entry by the operating departments. This will require departments to maintain a qualified timekeeper and backup timekeepers to continue to enter the pay details for employees on a weekly basis.

I. **Recruitment Processes** - The normal process of hiring new employees may be put on hold unless there is a critical need to immediately fill the position. However, during a public health emergency, it may be necessary to recruit additional employees to perform some essential services, if the required staffing cannot be provided with existing employees. Human Resources’ employment staff shall work directly with departments in order to determine priorities based upon their essential needs. It may be necessary (during a public health emergency only) to modify some recruitment procedures, to delay some pre-employment
requirements, to hire some employees without all the necessary qualifications or to recruit from alternate sources or retired City of Suffolk employees.

J. Employees’ Refusal to Work - In accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Section 35: A worker shall not carry out any work if, on reasonable and probable grounds, the worker believes that there exists an imminent danger to the health or safety of that worker or another worker present at the work site. If a worker refuses to carry out any work, he shall, as soon as practical, notify the supervisor of the reasons. Upon investigation, the supervisor shall take any actions to eliminate the imminent danger. The worker may be assigned to other work which they are reasonably capable of performing until the investigation is completed. Examples of the City of Suffolk controlling or eliminating the dangers include providing protective equipment, protective clothing, distancing measures and/or associated training (as long as it is reasonably practical for the City of Suffolk to do so). If a worker continues to refuse the work after the City of Suffolk concludes that imminent danger does not exist, the supervisor should then consult with department Director and Human Resources, and appropriate disciplinary actions may be applied on a case-by-case basis in accordance with City of Suffolk policy.

K. Worker’s Compensation Benefits - If an employee believes that he has contracted an infectious disease while performing duties on City of Suffolk business during a public health emergency, the employee may follow the normal procedures to complete a Worker’s Compensation claim form. If their claim is approved, he/she shall be paid in the same manner as others who are off work on approved claims.

L. Reporting Sick Leave Absences - Employees shall contact their supervisor in accordance with current notification procedures when they are unable to report to work due to quarantine, isolation or sick leave situations. It will be necessary for employees to report their absences, the reason for the absence and anticipated return to work date to their supervisor who will be responsible for ensuring that attendance records and timesheets are completed and entered properly.

M. Absence Verification - If a supervisor has reason to question the absence or the length of such absence of any employee, he/she shall consult with Human Resources to determine if further information or action is required.

N. Employees with Symptoms Excluded from Workplace - Employees should not report to work with pandemic influenza-like symptoms nor if they have been quarantined. Some employees will develop symptoms of pandemic influenza while at work. These individuals must notify their supervisor and then immediately leave the workplace. If the employee is too ill to drive themselves home, the supervisor shall arrange for alternate transportation to their home. Members of the general public or customers should be discouraged from entering the workplace if they are pandemic influenza symptomatic.

O. Disinfecting Shared Work Areas - If an employee has been identified as having been at work with pandemic influenza-like symptoms, the work station, work vehicle and any shared work areas will require cleaning. The supervisor is responsible for:

- Having cleaning supplies and appropriate protection available for employees to clean the area safely and without the risk of becoming infected themselves
- Assigning staff, using the proper protective equipment and procedures, to be responsible for disinfecting shared work areas

P. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Counseling Services - Eligible employees who might need counseling services for any reason should access the City of Suffolk’s EAP. In the event of critical illnesses or deaths of fellow employees or family members, the City of Suffolk shall endeavor to arrange for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing conducted by a qualified provider
for any affected City of Suffolk employee. Post-Traumatic-Stress Debriefing may also be necessary as the pandemic develops.

Q. **Alternative Work Schedule** - Departments shall review their normal business hours and work schedules to determine if they can be modified in a manner that best promotes social distancing, business continuity or other pandemic response goals during an emergency. If feasible, supervisors should first ask for employees to volunteer to work hours other than their usual schedule. Regular work schedules may be changed by a supervisor subject to a 24-hour cancellation notice, when possible, upon the proclamation of a pandemic influenza emergency. If less than a 24-hour notice is necessary, management may make such changes. Departments are encouraged to work with staff to minimize the impacts of decisions affecting schedule changes. Approved schedules shall also be formally documented. Review Human Resources’ guidelines on alternative work schedules for more details.

Recommended

Ronnie E. Charles  
Director, Human Resources  
10/13/09  
Date

Approved as to Form

C. Edward Roettger, Jr.  
City Attorney  
10/13/09  
Date

Approved

Selena Cuffee-Glenn  
City Manager  
10/15/09  
Date
Appendix 1

Hand Hygiene Guidelines

Pandemic Influenza is an infection of the lungs and airways caused by a virus. The virus passes from person to person by droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks and can be further spread by touching infected surfaces and then touching your eyes, nose, mouth or food before washing your hands. Viruses generally can live on hard surfaces for 1 to 2 days, on cloth/tissue and paper for 8 to 12 hours, and on hands for 5 minutes.

Next to immunization, the single most effective method of preventing pandemic influenza is frequent and proper hand washing.

Wash your hands:

Before:
- Touching your mouth, nose or eyes
- Handling or eating foods or feeding others
- Brushing or flossing teeth
- Inserting or removing contact lenses

After:
- Touching objects in a shared work space or a public area
- Treating wounds or cuts
- Having contact with a person who has influenza or their immediate environment
- Going to the bathroom or changing a diaper
- Blowing your nose or wiping a child’s nose
- Coughing or sneezing
- Handling garbage
- Children should wash their hands after playing with toys or books shared with other children.

How to wash your hands:
- You can use regular soap and water. Antibacterial soap is not necessary.
- Rub hands vigorously together covering all hand surfaces for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse under hot running water.
- Dry with a clean or disposable towel.
- If in a public restroom, use a disposable towel to turn off the faucet and open the door to avoid further unnecessary contact.
- Alcohol hand rubs are also effective. Rub hands vigorously together, covering all hand surfaces, for at least 20 seconds with alcohol hand rubs or hand sanitization.
Appendix 2

Respiratory Protection Guidelines

Cover your Cough:

Pandemic influenza is an infection of the lungs and airways caused by a virus. Droplets pass the pandemic influenza virus from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. Covering your mouth and nose when you cough is, therefore, very important.

Airborne droplets can enter the body through the eyes, nose or mouth. The virus, contained in droplets, can travel up to 2 meters (6 feet) in the air and can live on hard surfaces for 1 to 2 days, on cloth, tissues and paper for 8 to 12 hours, and on hands for 5 minutes. It is essential to wash your hands after you cover your cough, even when a tissue is used.

People generally develop symptoms of influenza 1 or 2 days after becoming infected. They are contagious from the day before they have the first symptoms until normally 5 days after the symptoms start.

Respiratory Protection Procedures:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
- Wash your hands after coughing, sneezing or using tissues.
- Throw away tissues after wiping your nose or coughing/sneezing into the tissue.
- Keep your fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth until you have washed your hands.
- Maintain your personal distance away from the next person to at least 2 meters (6 feet) or as directed by the Suffolk Health Department.
**Appendix 3**

**Communication Plan**

I. **BACKGROUND**

A. Because pandemic influenza will affect the entire world at the same time, response will not be limited to any one country, state, region, or local jurisdiction.

B. While the federal government is responsible for nationwide coordination of the pandemic influenza response, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) will be responsible for coordination of the pandemic influenza response within and among jurisdictions in Virginia. The City of Suffolk will be responsible for implementing Virginia’s response at the local level.

C. Coordinated communications among localities is a critical component as the local response is implemented. Communications during an influenza pandemic will follow the communications structure already established in the City of Suffolk Emergency Operations Plan with the Office of Media and Community Relations responsible for overall coordination.

D. Public information messages will be coordinated regionally.

E. The primary communications goal during a pandemic will be to ensure the timely, accurate, and consistent flow of information to health professionals, City agencies, and the general public. Information will be provided on vaccine management, antiviral medication use for treatment and chemoprophylaxis, influenza surveillance, infection control, and treatment and care of patients.

II. **Key Communications**

A. Key communication activities emphasize:

   1. The message will change during an event and will not rely upon a single source, but will utilize all available methods. Draft risk communication messages are included in Appendix B and will continue to be developed.

   2. Identification of spokespersons that will be responsible for addressing pandemic influenza related media concerns.

   3. Distribution of timely and appropriate influenza bulletins to health care providers and community partners.

   4. Dissemination of information about vaccine availability and distribution plans to community partners.

   5. Dissemination of the influenza vaccine information sheet to patients and area health care providers.

   6. Communication of information about groups at high-risk for complications from influenza to health care providers and community partners.
III. Key Messages

A. Key pandemic influenza communications to the general public will involve all of the following but are not limited to:
   1. Education about pandemic influenza
   2. How to prepare for pandemic influenza and any emergency that might require an extended stay at home
   3. How to stop the spread of the disease
   4. How to care for sick family members
   5. Whether to go to work/school/social functions
   6. Education on the use of masks
   7. Antiviral and/or vaccine distribution priority groups and how/where to get antiviral medications and/or vaccines if prioritization category is met.
   8. Resumption of regular activities as the pandemic event resolves
   9. Other information including city operations, etc.

IV. Target Audience

A. Key target audience include, but are not limited to:
   1. General Public (individuals/residents)
   2. Schools and parents
   3. Physicians and health care providers
   4. Business community
   5. Faith based and non-profit community
   6. Non-English speaking populations
   7. Senior citizens
   8. Other special needs populations (disability populations/special medical and social needs)
   9. Internal stakeholders (city government employees)

V. Message Development

A. General communication messages will be provided nationally by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and statewide by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM).

B. Specific messages relevant to Suffolk and partner jurisdictions will be based on local communications needs, general public inquires, and the current situation.

VI. Message Dissemination

A. A variety of tools and methods will be utilized to disseminate information to the various audiences. These include but are not limited to: web sites, mailings to residents and homeowner’s associations, e-mails, newsletters, speaker’s bureaus, and television/broadcasting.

B. The method of dissemination will be determined according to the nature of the communication and the intended audience.
VII. Communications Plan

A. Primary communication goals during a pandemic include ensuring a timely, accurate, and consistent flow of information in coordination with the Commonwealth of Virginia. Information will primarily be provided to local health districts, which will then relay the information to health professionals and the general public within their jurisdiction on vaccine management, antiviral use for treatment and chemoprophylaxis, influenza surveillance, infection control, and treatment and care of patients. VDH Epidemiology personnel will be available to assist where needed.

B. The City of Suffolk Health Department will strive to present messages consistent with those of the Commonwealth.

C. Key communication activities will include:
   1. Monitoring bulletins from VDH, the CDC and WHO regarding virologic, epidemiologic, and clinical findings associated with new variants isolated within or outside of the country.
   2. Distribution of timely and appropriate influenza bulletins and alerts.
   3. Participation in live, interactive videoconferencing on influenza, initiated among VDH health districts and central office personnel.
   4. Distribution of planning materials to schools, hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and others on preparing for and responding to pandemic influenza.
   5. Reporting influenza activity levels, including posting of data to the Suffolk flu website.
   6. Communication of information about groups at high-risk for complications from influenza.
   7. Identification of two spokespersons who will be responsible for addressing pandemic influenza related media concerns.
   8. Distribution of timely and appropriate influenza bulletins to community partners.
   9. Dissemination of information about vaccine availability and distribution plans to community partners.
  10. Dissemination of the influenza vaccine information sheet to clinic patients and area health care providers. Communication of information about groups at high-risk for complications from influenza to health care providers and community partners.

D. Background:
   1. As the initial communication effort during Phases 1 and 2 involves monitoring the status of potential outbreaks worldwide and circulating health and emergency information as needed, the communications plan is designed to be activated in Phase 3.
   2. Communication materials specific to City of Suffolk and partner jurisdictions will be prepared in advance for use during the Pandemic Alert Period (Phase 3, 4, 5) and Pandemic Period (Phase 6). Reviewing and obtaining approvals for these materials in advance can help identify potential areas of disagreement and allow time to work through issues.
   3. General communication messages will be provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).
   4. Specific messages relevant to City of Suffolk and partner jurisdictions will be based on local communications needs, general public inquires, and the current situation.
5. Spokespersons involved in implementing the pandemic influenza communications plan are listed below. Specific circumstances will determine which spokesperson may be involved in any given situation.
   a. Medical Spokespersons – Suffolk Health Department, or designee
   b. Non-medical Spokespersons
      i. City of Suffolk Director, Department of Media and Community Relations
      ii. City Manager
      iii. Deputy City Manager

E. Communication to Employees:
   1. Communications to employees shall be managed per the City of Suffolk operating procedures and the Pandemic Influenza Plan. The Department of Media and Community Relations will advise employees in advance where to find up-to-date and reliable information.
   2. Communications will include a dedicated webpage, e-mails, and City Municipal Channel that will provide for the dissemination of information and advising employees and the general public as appropriate.
   3. City’s influenza website will link to other local, state and federal agencies to create awareness and educate people on pandemic flu prevention and plans for the City.
   4. Anticipate the potential fear and anxiety of employees as a result of rumors and misinformation, and plan rapid and accurate communications accordingly.
   5. Disseminate information for employees who have families and dependents about the potential impact a pandemic influenza outbreak can have and how to prepare their families to respond to City operation interruptions.
   6. Educational communications will be provided to encourage employees to acquire and maintain personal regular healthcare services.
   7. Educational communications will be provided regarding the City of Suffolk’s leave policy that may be unique to a pandemic.