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PANDEMIC POLICY

Community Living-Central Huron is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all Staff, volunteers and people supported. The Agency will provide necessary resources to ensure Staff, volunteers and people supported are aware of the risk factors and requirements associated with a Pandemic, including pre, active and post-pandemic. Non-compliance with the Agency's Pandemic Plan is subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal from the Agency's employ and/or its services.

1. It is important to understand the definitions of 'influenza' (the flu) and 'pandemic'; attached is a comparison chart. Briefly:

a) **Influenza:** is caused by a flu virus which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). It usually starts suddenly and may include these symptoms: fever, muscle pain and weakness, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhea and vomiting (especially in children).

Influenza is transmitted from person to person through direct contact primarily when people who are infected cough or sneeze and droplets come into contact with the eyes, nose or mouth of another person. Also, influenza is indirectly transmitted when people touch contaminated hands, surfaces or objects and then touch their face. The virus can survive on nonporous surfaces such as doorknobs, countertops or toys for up to 48 hours. People who become infected with influenza are able to transmit the virus for 24 hours before symptoms appear and for up to 5 days after symptoms appear. Children can be infectious for up to 7 days after symptoms appear.

b) **Pandemic:** is distinguished from influenza by its scope; it becomes a worldwide epidemic, or pandemic, when a disease spreads easily and rapidly through many countries and regions of the world and affects a large percentage of the population where it spreads. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza "A" virus emerges to which the population has little or no immunity. It may spread easily from person to person and may cause serious illness and death. It is not known beforehand what age group will be most affected or what the severity will be. Pandemics are unpredictable and can happen at any time of the year.

c) **The World Health Organization:** monitors the status of influenza around the world and declares pandemic alert phases based on the number of cases and mode of the transmission of illness. At a provincial level, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Commission for Emergency Management will be jointly responsible. In Huron County, the Medical Officer of Health will confirm when there is local pandemic activity. Also, each local municipality has an emergency plan and may activate their plan in response to a pandemic emergency to coordinate the municipal support to the community. Community Living-Central Huron also has an Emergency Preparedness Plan No. D-003, which would be activated in conjunction with other local Emergency Plans and pandemic activity.

2. **The objectives of this Policy are to:**

- a) ensure all Staff, volunteers and people supported are educated about pandemic risk factors and prevention procedures;
- b) control infection risks through the application of controls;
- c) integrate pandemic prevention strategies in day-to-day operations;
- d) encourage Staff, volunteers and people supported to recognize this educational information has been provided to them to utilize in the workplace, at home and in the community.

People can lower the risk of a pandemic by usual, preventative practices against a range of illnesses that include:

- a) cover you nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze by using a tissue or coughing into your sleeve or elbow; dispose of the tissue immediately into a garbage can;
- b) wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze; alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer with 60 - 90% alcohol is also effective;
- c) avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, germs spread easily that way;
- d) do not share objects that have been in other people's mouths, ie. drinks, water bottles; lip products, musical instrument mouthpieces;
- e) if you get sick, stay home until you no longer have a fever and are feeling well; you should limit your contact with others during this time to keep from infecting them;
- f) if your symptoms worsen, contact your doctor;
- g) personally speak with your medical professional about getting the annual flu shot and/or vaccines.

The Executive Director and the Coordinator of Adult Services will work in conjunction with the Agency's Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee to maintain an up-to-date Pandemic Plan.

3. **What is the difference between seasonal influenza and pandemic influenza?**

Seasonal Influenza

Pandemic Influenza

<p>Occurs every winter between November and April.</p> <p>Peaks for a few months during the winter and then declines.</p> <p>Affects approximately 10 % - 20% of the population each year.</p> <p>Most people who get seasonal flu will get sick, but usually recover within 2 weeks.</p> <p>Some people will have immunity from previous exposure to that strain or/and from the annual flu vaccination.</p> <p>Symptoms are unpleasant, but most people do not become seriously ill or die. Very young, the elderly and people with certain chronic illnesses are most at risk.</p> <p>Annual vaccination available for protection.</p> <p>Affects mainly the young and very old and people who are immuno-compromised; does not usually affect health care delivery or other essential services.</p>	<p>Occurs approximately 3 times every century, ie. Spanish Flu (1918); Asian Flu (1957); Hong Kong Flu (1968).</p> <p>Occurs any time during the year; comes in 2 - 3 waves several months apart.</p> <p>May affect 30% of the population over the course of the outbreak.</p> <p>About 50% of the people who get pandemic flu will become ill, most will recover but it may take a long time, and some people will die.</p> <p>Most people will have little or no immunity to the new virus, therefore, more serious illness, a greater number of deaths.</p> <p>More serious infections and deaths will occur; people of any age will be at risk.</p> <p>No vaccine will be available at the start of the Pandemic; one may be available after 4 - 5 months.</p> <p>Could affect anyone, including health care providers and their families, as well as other essential service workers.</p>
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4. **PANDEMIC PROCEDURES FOR ADULT SERVICES:**

In conjunction with Community Living-Central Huron’s Emergency Preparedness Procedures, the information outlined below is specific to Influenza Pandemic and the operations of Adult Services.

The World Health Organization monitors the status of influenza around the world and declares pandemic alert phases. It describes the alert phases as follows:

Phases	Description
1 and 2	No animal influenza virus circulating among domesticated or wild animals has been reported or known to have caused infection in humans.
3	An animal or human-animal influenza virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people, but no human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community-level outbreaks.
4	Verified human to human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza virus able to sustain community-level outbreaks.
5	The same virus as identified in phase 4 has caused sustained community-level outbreaks in two or more countries in one World Health Organization region.
6	In addition to the description in phase 5, the same virus has caused sustained community-level outbreak in a least one other country in another World Health Organization region.
Post-Peak Period	Pandemic influenza in most countries has dropped below peak levels.
Post-Pandemic Period	Influenza activity has returned to levels as seen for seasonal influenza in most countries.

5. **Responsibilities:**
Senior Case Managers:
- a) Obtain and maintain a daily update regarding the number of people supported and Staff members who have been diagnosed with the influenza pandemic.
 - b) Maintain ongoing contact with relevant, qualified health professionals, such as the Huron County Health Unit and share important information with Staff, individuals supported and family/caregivers. The Senior Case Manager(s) will assess and determine the most appropriate means of communication and content to be shared with Staff, individuals supported, families/caregivers and any other relevant individuals and/or services. Timely Team and Staff Meetings to occur to review individual needs, site specific procedures and Staffing concerns.
 - c) Encourage people supported, Staff and volunteers to report symptoms associated with the influenza pandemic and that they should seek advice from their health care provider regarding such.
 - d) Assess Staffing resources and adjust work schedule accordingly to ensure quality supports, as well as health & safety of people supported, Staff and volunteers. Consideration may be given to orientating Staff unfamiliar to work locations. Also, families/immediate caregivers may be approached about taking their family member home.
 - e) Establish Action Plans as necessary, for each work location to include, but not limited to: delivery of groceries, medications, isolation and/or quarantine of people supported, Staff and volunteers.
 - f) Assess the need to close 'Day Programs,' ie. Activity Centre & Employment Support. Families will be notified of current situation by relevant Senior Case Manager or designate.
 - g) Provide necessary equipment and resources in pandemic procedures to reduce the spread of infection for people supported, Staff and volunteers; evaluate and update monthly. Equipment to include N95 masks, gloves, antiseptic hand wash, cleaning supplies and any other equipment recommended by qualified health professionals.
 - h) Provide training both general and site-specific on pandemic prevention, universal precautions, communicable diseases and hazard identification. Information to include DVD - "Stop the Spread," "Infectious Disease Control" poster, pamphlets and memos.
 - i) Establish cleaning practices and infection control of work location, in consultation with qualified health professionals.
 - j) Encourage safe food handling practices, proper storage of foods, handling of eating utensils, in consultation with qualified health professionals.

5. **Staff/Volunteers:**
- a) Comply with any requirements, procedures and/or protocols at all times and seek clarification as required. Staff are expected to work their scheduled shifts unless otherwise directed by Management Staff. If there are extenuating and/or changed circumstances relating to Staff's health (asthma, pregnancy, illness, etc.) they must inform the relevant Senior Case Manager immediately. A medical note may be requested when Staff are unable to work.
 - b) Staff may be required to work additional shifts during an influenza pandemic and while every effort will be made to comply with the Employment Standards Act (ESA) related to hours free from work/hours of work, it may be necessary to rely on the exception in the ESA for Emergency and Exceptional circumstances.
 - c) Participate in mandatory training and ongoing education as determined by Community Living-Central Huron.
 - d) Report any unsafe acts, hazards, equipment shortages and/or problems or any unsafe conditions immediately to their Supervisor and/or pager.
 - e) Report any influenza pandemic symptoms to their Supervisor immediately and participate in procedures as determined by their Supervisor.
 - f) Stay home from work if sick and seek necessary medical attention.
 - g) Consult your health care provider about getting the annual flu shot and/or vaccines.
 - h) Provide your Supervisor with daily reports.

6. **Post-Pandemic:**

The following will be taken into consideration following influenza pandemic:

- a) communication and sharing of information with people supported, families/caregivers, all Staff, volunteers, Board Members, Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee, Medical Officer of Health and the Ministry;
- b) continued monitoring of pandemic activity and immunization of individuals supported and/or Staff, where appropriate;
- c) monitoring of any potential after effects of the pandemic;
- d) evaluation of pandemic response, plan and procedures; revisions to be incorporated as necessary; and
- e) provide counselling services to individuals supported, Staff and volunteers as required.