

DIOCESE OF TUCSON 2009 INFLUENZA SEASON RESPONSE PLAN

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DIOCESE OF TUCSON 2009 INFLUENZA SEASON RESPONSE PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

At the time of the writing of this plan, there is considerable concern regarding the possibility of a widespread pandemic of the H1N1 virus, commonly referred to as the “Swine Flu.”

Following the June 2009 determination by the World Health Organization (WHO) that a pandemic of the H1N1 flu was underway, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed that human infections with the H1N1 virus were present in the United States. Although most who have become ill with the H1N1 virus have recovered without requiring medical treatment, this flu is quite contagious, and severe illnesses and death have occurred.

A. DIOCESE OF TUCSON RESPONSE

In response to concerns about the impact of the H1N1 virus, the Diocese of Tucson has established this response plan to provide guidance to diocesan entities, including parishes, on the recommended actions to prevent and to minimize the possibility of infection and on actions to be taken in the event of a widespread infection or a pandemic affecting the local area. This plan draws upon information provided by the Centers for Disease Control, local health authorities, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

B. HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

The Diocese of Tucson has appointed a Health and Welfare Committee comprised of these members of the Bishop Moreno Pastoral Center staff:

Richard Serrano, Director, Human Resources

Fred Allison, Director, Communications Office

Sr. Lois Paha, O.P., Director, Pastoral Services

Sr. Ruthmary Powers, H.M., Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools

David Miller, Real Estate Specialist/Risk Management Assistant

John Shaheen, Director, Property and Insurance

II. SCOPE OF RESPONSE PLAN

The recommendations cited in this plan apply to the Bishop Moreno Pastoral Center, parishes, Affiliated Church Organizations, and other entities within the Diocese of Tucson that subscribe to the Pastoral Services Agreement. Direction on actions to be taken by Catholic Schools within the Diocese is provided by the State of Arizona Department of Education in its “Guidance to Schools on Pandemic Preparedness.”

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

The spread of the 2009 H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Infections can also be spread by touching a surface or an object that contains flu viruses and then touching one's mouth, nose, or eyes.

The symptoms of the H1N1 virus include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people may experience vomiting and diarrhea. There also may be respiratory symptoms without a fever.

A. WARNING SIGNS

If you or a family member become ill and experience any of these warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

1. Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up as usual or not interacting
- Excessive irritability

2. Adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse coughing

B. SEVERITY

The CDC has reported that symptoms of the H1N1 virus range from mild to severe. As with seasonal flu, certain people are at "high risk" of serious complications. These include people 65 and older, children younger than five years old, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions. Although most people do not require hospitalization, about 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized have had one or more of the following medical conditions:

- Pregnancy
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Asthma
- Kidney disease

Over 90 percent of the deaths and about 60 percent of the hospitalizations occur in people older than 65.

People affected with seasonal or H1N1 flu may be able to infect others from one day before getting sick to five to seven days afterwards. This infectious stage can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the H1N1 virus.

IV. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS - EMPLOYEES AND OTHER STAFF PERSONNEL

A. PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with the flu or the H1N1 virus can go to work as usual. These employees should, however, monitor their health every day and take everyday precautions such as:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are easily spread in this manner.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are sick
- If you live in an area where health authorities have identified the presence of the H1N1 virus and you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people. Except to get medical care or for other necessities, you should stay at home for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications after your fever is gone.
- Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from spreading the virus.

B. CONTAMINATION AND CLEANING

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces such as books, papers, and doorknobs and can infect a person for two to eight hours after being deposited on the surface. Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212 degrees F). In addition, several chemical germicides, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, soap, iodine-based antiseptics, and alcohol are effective if used in proper concentration for a sufficient length of time.

To prevent the spread of influenza virus, it is recommended that tissues and other disposable items used by an infected person be thrown in the trash. Additionally, persons should wash their hands with soap and water after touching used tissues and similar waste. It is important to keep surfaces, especially bedside tables,

surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters, and toys clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant as directed on the product label.

Linens, eating utensils, and dishes used by persons ill with the H1N1 virus do not need to be cleaned separately, but it is important that these items not be shared without washing them thoroughly first. Linens such as bed sheets and towels should be washed by using household laundry soap and tumbled in a hot dryer. Persons should wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand rub immediately after handling dirty laundry. It is important that eating utensils be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with soap and water.

V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS - EMPLOYERS

A. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Clear, concise, and timely communications are essential when health authorities have identified the presence of H1N1 virus. It is recommended that each work location designate a person who will communicate with local health authorities so that accurate and timely information can be provided to employees and volunteers.

1. **Communications Contact Pima County** - In Pima County, the diocesan Director of Communications will be the liaison with the Pima County Health Department and with the Department of Emergency Preparedness. In the event that information should need to be disseminated to parishes within Pima County, the Director of Communications and the Director of Human Resources will issue an advisory on any actions that may be necessary.
2. **Communications Contact – Other Counties** - For parishes outside Pima County, it is recommended that each Vicar Forane designate a liaison with each of the pertinent county agencies in which the vicariate is located. The vicariates and the counties in which they are located are:
 - Cochise Vicariate Cochise County
 - Gila/Pinal Vicariate Gila County and Pinal County
 - Graham/Greenlee Vicariate Graham County and Greenlee County
 - Pinal West Vicariate Pinal County
 - Santa Cruz Vicariate Santa Cruz County
 - Yuma/La Paz Vicariate Yuma County and La Paz County
3. **Contact Responsibilities** - The person designated in each vicariate as the liaison is responsible for communicating with the diocesan Director of Communications and the Director of Human Resources to ensure the appropriate advisory is issued to parishes or other entities.

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4. **Dissemination of Information, Telephone Tree** – When necessary, it is recommended that a telephone tree be established for large parishes and other large organizations in order to notify all personnel in the event that an announcement of a curtailing or shut-down of operations is necessary and for the announcement of the rescinding of a curtailing or shut down of operations.

B. WORKPLACE MONITORING

Workplace supervisors are responsible for monitoring employee health and for taking appropriate action related to:

- Ensuring awareness of employee vacation and leave policies in the event that employees need to take time off. Supervisors should review policies with employees.
- Monitoring employees for any signs of possible infection. If necessary, to the supervisor should send an affected employee home for the protection of the employee and to prevent infection of others.
- Being sensitive to an employee's need to take time off in order to care for a sick family member (Providing time off for this reason also can reduce the risk of further infection in the workplace.)

VI. COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

In the event of a significant spread of the H1N1 virus, it is important that pastors and supervisors be aware of and implement preventative measures that may be necessary.

- A. **Community gatherings** – Consider limiting or postponing meetings as a preventive measure. Consider placing sanitizing agents at convenient locations when gatherings do occur and remind attendees of the need to employ preventive measures at all times.
- B. **Liturgies** – Consider the possibility of discouraging person-to-person contact during Eucharistic celebrations such as shaking of hands or hugging during the Sign of Peace and the holding of hands during the Lord's Prayer. While the Health and Welfare Committee will be in contact with the Bishop and the Vicar General regarding any recommended changes to liturgies and will communicate with pastors if changes become necessary, pastors are encouraged to consult the Bishop or Vicar General prior to making any changes they feel are necessary to respond to specific local situations.
- C. **Dispensing of Communion and Sacraments** - As suggested by the USCCB, priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist especially should be reminded of the need to practice good hygiene by always washing their hands before Mass and by using an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion. Priests should consider the use of an alcohol based solution after receiving the gifts from bearers. The faithful should be instructed not to receive from the cup if they feel ill.

VII. CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

In order to carry out its particular mission and to provide continuing service to the faithful, it is important that parishes and work locations remain open during the event of widespread illness due to the H1N1 virus by implementing these recommendations

- A. **Identification of key Processes and key Employees** – It is recommended that each work location identify the key processes necessary to continue service at a minimum level and to identify the key individuals who would remain at the work location to fulfill responsibilities related to those key processes. It is further recommended that training be provided so that those key processes are adequately managed by qualified individuals.
- B. **Alternate work arrangements** – In some organizations, due to lack of availability of personnel, it may be necessary to re-arrange work schedules to adequately support the key processes. It is recommended that parishes contact the diocesan Human Resources Director about the details of any alternate work arrangements prior to their implementation to make sure the arrangements meet legal requirements.
- C. **Recovery plans** – In the event of widespread illness due to the H1N1 virus that has affected a significant number of employees, workplaces should develop a recovery plan to sanitize the work areas (desks, telephones, and common work areas) before employees are allowed to return.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION – DIOCESE OF TUCSON

▪ Human Resources (Ricardo Serrano)	520-838-2565	520-909-3687
▪ Communications (Fred Allison)	520-838-2561	520-909-1547
▪ Pastoral Services (Sr. Lois Paha)	520-838-2542	520-609-5672
▪ Catholic Schools (Sr. Ruthmary Powers)	520-792-3410	216-280-4809
▪ Property and Insurance (John Shaheen)	520-838-2570	520-919-1489
▪ Risk Management (David Miller)	520-838-2519	520-400-3067