

MHGS H1N1 Pandemic Preparedness & Response Plan

In June, the World Health Organization declared an H1N1 ("swine flu") pandemic due to the global spread of this novel flu. Public health officials have advised that H1N1 flu could have a widespread impact in fall 2009.

MHGS's primary responsibility and goal is to safeguard the health of our students, faculty, staff, and other members of our community. At the same time, we have sought to develop a plan that would minimize disruption and support the continuity of our mission.

The key goals of MHGS's pandemic plan are to:

1. promote the safety of all students and employees
2. reduce illness and serious complications
3. minimize social and educational disruption;
4. insure the school's ability to continue core and critical functions; and,
5. minimize economic losses.

Prevention is Key

The importance of preventive measures **CAN NOT** be overemphasized. H1N1 is primarily spread through droplets on surfaces. Advice recommended by experts includes:

- Cover your nose and mouth by coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your sleeve rather than your bare hand.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds at a time, or use alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean public contact surfaces such as keyboards, telephones, door handles, etc. regularly with an anti-bacterial cleanser.
- Stay home from school or work if you are sick.

Vaccination

Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to be vaccinated for the seasonal flu. Indications are that this vaccine provides some immunity in the prevention or lessening of the H1N1 flu. Locations can be found on the following website maintained by the American Lung Association: <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/>.

An H1N1 vaccine is expected to be made available this fall or early winter by the federal government. MHGS will provide further information as it becomes available.

In Case of An Outbreak

Public health officials recommend that those with "influenza-like" symptoms self-isolate until they have been free of fever for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication). Self-isolation means staying home and limiting contact with others.

"Influenza-like" symptoms include the following:

- Fever of 100.4° F or greater
- Cough or sore throat
- Body aches
- And occasionally abdominal pain and vomiting

People without a fever do not need to be concerned. Sore throat, cold symptoms, and cough, without fever are not signs of H1N1 influenza.

Students staying home from class, practicum, or other academic activities due to “influenza-like” symptoms are to email a specially designated email, flu@mhgs.edu, the day they stay home, indicating the class(es) missed. This is important for two reasons:

- Faculty will allow a student who misses an exam or assignment because of illness to make up that work in an appropriate fashion if he or she reported the absence.
- It will enable MGHS to better track the severity of the outbreak at MHGS.

Faculty and staff who are experiencing “influenza-like” symptoms should notify their manager or the front desk and stay home from work.

Next Steps

We will continue to carefully monitor the H1N1 outbreak. To date, H1N1 symptoms in the U.S. have been similar to those of regular seasonal flu. As with other flu strains, treatment is focused on the use of medications to reduce fever and associated symptoms, fluids, and rest while one’s own immune system fights off the illness. Anti-viral medication is indicated only for people with specific medical conditions or severe illness (see <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm> for more details).

Communication methods for alerting students, faculty, and staff if a situation arose necessitate closing the school to prevent the spread of the virus are being researched.

The Response Plan will be updated to include planning by state and other pertinent agencies as this information becomes available. Since no plan can accurately anticipate the scope of a pandemic and its impact on a community, individual responsibility for safety and well-being is strongly emphasized.

For further information, please feel free to contact the members of the Pandemic Planning Team (see below).

MHGS PANDEMIC PLANNING TEAM

- Amy Wilson — Director of Human Resources
- Nathan Sweet – Facilities Manager
- Kristen Houston – Registrar/Director of Academic Services
- Cheryl Goodwin – Director of Institutional Assessment & Library Services

Additional information may be found through the following links:

- [The U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources site](#): one-stop access to U.S. Government avian and pandemic flu information.
- The World Health Organization’s [Epidemic and Pandemic Alert Response Information](#) website.
- The [Washington State Department of Health site](#) with FAQ’s and preparation information.
- [Washington State Board of Health](#) Web site.
- [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#) Web site.
- [King County Office of Emergency Management](#).
- [Checklist](#) to help individuals gather the information and resources that may need in event of a pandemic.
- [Information from the Washington State Department of Health](#) on family preparedness for a pandemic.