



BC Housing

SAMPLE
Pandemic Continuity Plan
for Housing/Service Providers

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1. Purpose

This Pandemic Continuity Plan is developed as a guide for Housing Providers to facilitate the continuation of essential services and/or functions during a pandemic emergency.

2. Background

“Influenza” refers to a family of virus-caused diseases that result in respiratory infection with fairly predictable symptoms. An influenza pandemic may affect a significant number of employees at any given time, removing them from the workforce for a variety of reasons.

Those who become ill are expected to be incapacitated for days or weeks. Other employees will choose to stay home to care for sick family members or may have difficulty with childcare due to schools and daycare closures. As a result, the Housing Provider could be unable to maintain services during this period which places vulnerable persons at risk.

3. Planning 1st Steps – Before a Pandemic Influenza Breaks Out

3.1. *Maintaining your Critical Business Functions*

3.1.1. **Critical Business Functions**

Start by identifying the Critical Business Functions for your organization. A critical business function is that function, or those functions, that must be performed in order for the organization to remain in business/operation until the situation returns to normal.

Use the table in Appendix 1 to list your Critical Business Functions. Samples for housing providers include:

- Continue to provide Housing
- Maintaining a safe environment within the building
- Maintaining secure access to and within the building

- Providing essential services to residents (e.g. meals, specialized treatment, counselling)

3.1.2. Staffing Plan

Once you've identified your critical business functions, you must identify what staffing resources/alternatives exist to maintain your operation with a 30/35 percent reduction in staffing levels:

- Identify the essential/core services and their functions that are performed. Prioritize the services. (See Appendix 2).
- By priority, identify the minimum staffing levels needed to maintain the services in a pandemic situation. (See Appendix 3)
- Identify and consider various temporary alternatives and sources for maintaining staffing levels and essential/core services.

3.1.3. Cross-Training of Staff

Having identified the critical business functions that must be performed in your business over a minimum of a six to eight week period:

- Identify all the staff that could perform those critical business functions.
- Identify all staff that have been cross-trained on the critical business function.
- Note any people that have left your business unit and are still employed in your organization who might be utilized if not required in their current position.
- Note any former employees that recently retired that could perform any of the critical business functions of your unit.
- Consider whether temporary staff from an agency could be called in to perform the critical business functions.

Cross training/buddy systems/contingency plans are important to establish long before a pandemic occurs, especially in areas that have very limited staffing, such as at our development sites. Try and establish as many options as possible and consider how we will support those critical business functions.

3.1.4. Staffing Levels

Statistics indicate that employers should be prepared for staff reductions of at least 30/35 percent during the waves of a pandemic outbreak. It is likely that staff shortages may actually reach upwards of 50 percent for 2 to 3 weeks at the peak of a pandemic wave. Staff reductions of 30/35 percent would translate into

similar or higher staffing levels than at the peak of yearly vacation scheduling. However, it should be noted that supervisors stagger the number of people in their business units that will be on vacation at one time and ensure that cross-trained staff can pick up the slack, whereas this may not be possible in a pandemic outbreak.

3.1.5. Infection Countermeasures and Education

Staff awareness is a big part of the first stage of pandemic planning. It is important to educate employees in the various ways that they can protect their own health and the health of others. Utilize the information in Appendix “4” to educate staff on the various ways to protect themselves and others.

4. The Next Stage - If a Pandemic Is Active in Other parts of the World.

If a pandemic has broken out in other parts of the world, evaluate your current staffing levels and develop plans for each critical business function in each business unit using the templates attached.

4.1. Staffing Plan

Take your staffing plan (Appendices 2 and 3) that identifies your critical business functions and now consider the situation of the individual employee that performs each critical business function. Work up a plan for each person, considering the following alternate service delivery options: (See Appendix 3)

- Does the employee have school aged children and/or responsibility for elderly parents? If the answer is yes, make contingency plans to cover their position for periods of time during the pandemic wave as it is anticipated that schools may close during a pandemic and the elderly may require assistance.
- Can the critical business function be performed from home, or can the employee be based from home rather than the office? Staff may only need to come into the office once a week for files and supplies.

- If the employee must perform their duties in the office, do they take transit to work? (There may be transit interruptions and taking transit will expose the employee to more people). If the answer is yes, consider whether the employee could work shift work (5:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. or 1:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.) to reduce the face-to-face contact in the office and to have the person travel on transit at off-peak periods. As well, consider if there are car-pooling opportunities within the organization for this employee.
- If shift work is an option in your department/region, work with your staff to identify which shift works best for them while still maintaining coverage for the services delivered by your area.

For each employee that provides a critical business function and must perform their duties in the office (Appendix 3 previously completed) will have outlined alternative staffing service delivery options if required.

5. Initiate Your Plans – When Notification of a Pandemic has Occurred

5.1. Communications to Staff and Strategic Stakeholders

Immediately upon the outbreak of a pandemic, contact any major stakeholders to determine the nature of the outbreak, who or what is affected, what is being done about it, and what we need to do. Communicate the appropriate information to employees, tenants, and other key stakeholders.

5.2. Initiate the following Social Distancing Procedures and Information

- Influenza notifications should be posted in lunch rooms and other areas to raise staff awareness of influenza symptoms (Appendix 5).
- Ask staff to discontinue sharing cutlery, plates, cups, magazines, etc.
- Encourage staff to bring their lunch, stagger their lunch hours and to eat at their desk or away from others (avoid the lunch room or crowded restaurants).
- If face-to-face meetings with people are unavoidable, minimize the meeting time, choose a large meeting room and sit at least one meter away from each other if possible; avoid shaking

hands or hugging. Consider holding meetings in the open air if weather permits.

- Encourage staff to avoid recreational or other leisure classes/meetings etc. where they might come into contact with infectious people.
- Encourage people to use on-line services or the telephone to conduct their business where possible.
- Where possible, reduce exposure between staff and the public.

5.3. Human Resources Policies and Agreements

Consider amending human resource policies to allow more flexibility for staff to be able to cope with health, family and other pandemic related challenges.

5.4. Managing Staff Who Become Ill at Work

Monitor the health status of employees. If a person feels ill, or if someone observes that another person is exhibiting symptoms of illness at work, they should notify the ill employee's manager or supervisor. The manager/supervisor should take action to send the employee home and to disinfect their work area.

5.5. Other Community Based Public Health Measures

Additional public health measures for community based disease control will be considered. The trigger for these measures will depend on the way in which the pandemic unfolds. Decisions on implementing these measures will be made by the Health Authorities, the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments to ensure consistency. Some measures have been assessed as being effective as a community based strategy. Samples of these measures can be found in Appendix 7.

6. RECOVERY

Once the pandemic wave has passed, Housing Providers will need to evaluate the impacts and begin recovery operations.

Appendix 1

CRITICAL BUSINESS FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES

1.	Critical Business Function Position	
2.	Employee(s) responsible for function	
3.	Critical functions performed	
4.	Other staff who are cross-trained	
5.	Cross-training on other positions	
6.	Other staff, temps or retirees who could perform the duties	
7.	Does the current incumbent have school age children at home?	
8.	How does the current incumbent travel to work (i.e. transit, carpool, SOV)	
9.	Does the employee(s) work allow for shift work (i.e. 6:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.)? If so, identify which shift would work better.	
10.	Software that may be needed to perform the job.	



ESSENTIAL SERVICES IDENTIFICATION

1. For your Organization/Department, list each core service in Column A. Remember to consider core services that may be seasonal (e.g. Month/year end procedures or snow removal).
2. List the functions associated with that core service in Column B.
3. Using the following planning criteria categorize each function in Column C:

Priority 1	Potential to affect health and safety of the public or is legislated or required by law.
Priority 2	Major inconvenience to the Client but does not affect health and safety.
Priority 3	Minor inconvenience to the Client; service probably not missed or could be deferred over the short term (6 weeks).

4. In Column D, enter your assessment of the potential increase in demand for this service during a pandemic.
5. Those service activities listed as Priority 1 are considered **Essential Services** that must be maintained during a pandemic.

Department: _____

A	B	C	D
Service	Function	Priority	Potential for Increased Demand (Low, Medium, High)



ESSENTIAL SERVICES STAFFING

Priority 1 Functions/Services

1. In Column A - List the Priority 1 & 2 functions (identified using Appendix 1 from column B).
2. In Column B, list the current number of staff performing this service.
3. In Column C, list the assessed minimum number of staff that could perform this service.
4. In Column D, calculate the pandemic staff reduction by multiplying column B by 65% (the worst case planning assumption is 35% staff off).
5. In Column E, calculate the possible staffing shortfall by listing the difference between Column C and Column D (difference between staff remaining after applying 35% reduction and the minimum required to perform the service).

Department/Function: _____

A	B	C	D	E
Priority 1 Function	Current Staff	Minimum Staff (consider level needed for vacation coverage)	Pandemic Staff Reduction (B X 65%)	Potential Pandemic Staff Shortfall

NOTE: This table provides basic information as a basis for planning. More detailed planning is required. Within a staff complement there will be positions that may be identified as more critical than others because of the number and/or qualifications and these should be examined more closely.

INFLUENZA EDUCATION/COMMUNICATIONS FOR STAFF

- **Hand washing** – Hands can play a significant role in acquiring and in transmitting a virus from one person to another. Good hand washing habits are more likely to prevent infections than excessive cleaning and disinfection. Most people do not wash their hands for long enough or in the correct manner. See the following hand washing guidelines:
<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/slide-shows/washing-hands-saves-lives>.
Wash your hands often, especially:
 - Before, during, and after you prepare food
 - Before you eat, and after you use the washroom
 - After handling animals or animal waste
 - When your hands are dirty, and
 - More frequently when someone in your home is sick
- **Touching your eyes, nose or mouth** – Try to refrain from touching your face unless you have just washed your hands. It is especially important when using contact lenses that your hands have been washed well.
- **Cough etiquette** – Turning your head and coughing or sneezing into a disposable tissue or the inside of your elbow will assist in reducing the spread of germs. Remember that you are contagious and spreading germs before you ever start feeling the symptoms of the flu. Also, use disposable tissues once and ensure that you place them in the garbage right away so that they do not contaminate surfaces.
- **At the washroom sink** - Use a paper towel to turn off the tap in the washroom after you have washed your hands so that you don't contaminate your hands again. Use the same paper towel to open the door of the washroom and other doors that you may have to open to get back to your work area.
- **Hand Sanitizer** – use alcohol based waterless sanitizers where water basins are not possible. Hand sanitizers don't clean visibly soiled hands, but they do kill germs on hands. Hand sanitizers should not be confused with anti-bacterial soaps, where concerns have been raised about their possible role in antibiotic resistance. Alcohol based hand sanitizers do not pose this risk.
- **Shared work areas** – If you share a work space with others, ensure that you clean telephones, keyboards and other surfaces that may be touched by many people. Office Services provides wipes that can be used for this purpose.

- **Getting an annual flu vaccination** – It is a good idea to get your annual flu vaccination, and ensure your family members do as well. While this will not protect from the pandemic new virus strain, it will prevent other forms of influenza in 70% of the healthy population.
- **Maintain a good diet** – Try to get adequate sleep, a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water.
- **Knowing the difference between a cold and the flu** – You will likely know the difference between a cold and the flu. Most flu symptoms typically appear so quickly that people can recall the exact moment they first felt sick. Know the similarities and differences in symptoms of the flu and a cold as noted below:

SYMPTOM	INFLUENZA	COMMON COLD
Fever	Usual, sudden onset 38° - 40° and lasts 3-4 days	Rare
Headache	Usual and can be severe	Rare
Aches and pains	Usual and can be severe	Rare
Fatigue and weakness	Usual and can last 2-3 weeks or more after the acute illness	Sometimes, but mild
Debilitating fatigue	Usual, early onset can be severe	Rare
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea	In children < 5 years old	Rare
Watering of the eyes	Rare	Usual
Runny, stuffy nose	Rare	Usual
Sneezing	Rare in early stages	Usual
Sore throat	Usual	Usual
Chest discomfort	Usual and can be severe	Sometimes, but mild to moderate
Complications	Respiratory failure; can worsen current chronic conditions; can be life threatening	Congestion or ear-ache
Fatalities	Well recognised	Not reported
Prevention	Influenza vaccine; frequent hand-washing; cover your cough	Frequent hand-washing, cover your cough

Hand Sanitizing Stations

Consider setting up hand sanitizing stations for staff at all of the office facilities and provide front-line staff with their own bottles of sanitizer. Hand sanitizer gel would not be provided to staff to replace hand washing with soap and water. However, there are times when it may not be convenient or practical to get to a sink to wash your hands and the hand sanitizing stations will allow staff to kill germs without water.

INFLUENZA NOTIFICATION

Influenza is a contagious disease.

There is currently an increase in the numbers of people in British Columbia with influenza.

To reduce the spread in this workplace, the following actions are required from all employees:

DO NOT COME TO WORK if you have:

- Chills, shivering and a fever (temperature above 38° C).
- Onset of muscle aches and pains.
- Sore throat.
- Dry cough.
- Trouble breathing.
- Sneezing.
- Stuffy or runny nose.
- Tiredness.

If some of the above apply to you, please go home and wait until you have recovered before returning to work.

If you have recently arrived from overseas or returned from overseas, please advise your Manager/Supervisor.

If you start to feel ill at work, PLEASE DO NOT leave your work area.

Call your Manager/Supervisor and advise them that you are feeling unwell.

WORKPLACE CLEANING

During a pandemic, you will need to implement additional measures to minimize the transmission of the virus through environmental sources, particularly hard surfaces (e.g., sinks, handles, railings, objects and counters). Transmission from contaminated hard surfaces is unlikely but influenza viruses may live up to two days on such surfaces.

Influenza viruses are inactivated by alcohol and by chlorine. Cleaning of environmental surfaces with a neutral detergent followed by a disinfectant solution is recommended. Surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned often, preferably daily. The table below suggests the appropriate choice and concentration of disinfectants:

Disinfectants	Recommended Use	Precautions
1000 parts per million of available chlorine, usually achieved by a 1 in 5 dilution of 100 % disinfectant bleach (e.g. Clorox Bleach or Javex Bleach)	Disinfection of material contaminated with blood and body fluids	Should be used in well-ventilated areas. Protective clothing required while handling and using undiluted bleach. Do not mix with strong acids to avoid release of chlorine gas. Corrosive to metals.
Granular chlorine: e.g. Det-Sol 5000 or Diversol, to be diluted as per manufacture's instructions.	May be used in place of liquid bleach, if it is unavailable	Same as above.
Alcohol: E.g. Isopropyl 70%, ethyl alcohol 60%.	Smooth metal surfaces, tabletops and other surfaces on which bleach cannot be used e.g. wood surfaces.	Flammable and toxic. To be used in well-ventilated areas. Avoid inhalation. Keep away from heat sources, electrical equipment, flames and hot surfaces. Allow to dry completely, particularly when using diathermy, as this can cause diathermy burns.

When a person with suspected influenza is identified and has left the workplace, it is important that her/his work area/office, along with any other known places s/he has been, are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

SAMPLE COMMUNITY BASED PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

- **Self Isolation**

Individuals who are ill will be asked to stay home from public locations. Adults recommended for self isolation should remain home for a minimum of five days after onset of symptoms (seven days for young children) or until symptoms have resolved, unless they need to visit a health care provider. During this period people should avoid close contact with unexposed household members. “Close contact” is defined as face to face exposure within one metre (three feet) of another individual. Frequent disinfection of household surfaces should be practiced.

- **Quarantine**

At the very early stages of a pandemic, contacts and individuals linked to exposure sites may be quarantined in an effort to slow transmission in the community. This measure would only be applied if there were sporadic infections or clusters in the Region and not if there was efficient virus spread in the general population.

- **School/Daycare Closure**

Children are known to be efficient transmitters of influenza. Closing schools and daycare facilities may reduce transmission or delay the spread of the disease, particularly if the pandemic is causing high attack rates in school aged children. This control measure will have an effect on the parents and caregivers and could divert essential workers to child-care responsibilities. School boards or daycare administrators may choose to independently close their facilities based on their own criteria for safe facility operation.

- **Restriction of Large Gatherings**

This would involve closing of indoor gathering places for people. Gatherings may include sporting events, theatre, conferences as well as mass public transportation services. Because the effectiveness of this measure is not documented and the difficulty with sustainability of cancelling or restricting indoor gatherings, this measure is not recommended in the Canadian pandemic plan as a broad public health

measure. However, this measure remains an option for targeted events to reduce transmission.

- **Social Distancing**

Once a pandemic has arrived in a community, people should use “social distancing” as a way to reduce the risk of being exposed. The Health Authorities will provide advice. Some strategies for social distancing include:

- Avoid “close contact” with individuals (i.e. within 1 metre).
- Minimize visitors to homes.
- Cancel family gatherings.
- Avoid shaking hands, hugging, or kissing people as greetings.
- Stock up on groceries and shop less frequently.
- Work from home if possible.
- Minimize contact at work by teleconferencing.
- Utilize means other than public transit.

- **Use of Masks by Healthy Individuals**

This measure is not recommended in the Canadian Pandemic Plan as a community based intervention. It is assessed that it is not likely to be effective in reducing disease spread in the general population. It is recognized that wearing a surgical mask properly at the time of an exposure may provide a barrier, if used with other infection control measures. If masks are used, they should only be used once and must be changed if they become wet (because they become ineffective when wet). As well masks must be removed properly to avoid contaminating the wearer. It is not feasible to wear masks for the duration of a pandemic wave and there may be supply problems. Again, advice will be provided by the Health Authorities.

- **Hand Sanitizing Stations in Public Settings**

Frequent hand washing is an effective infection control measure. However, the Canadian Pandemic Plan does not recommend establishing sanitizing stations in public settings such as public transit stations. It is assessed that this would not be effective in significantly reducing the spread of the disease in the general population. Compliance would not be assured and these stations would require human and financial resources to maintain. Hand washing must be encouraged and existing public washrooms should be appropriately

stocked with supplies at all times. People should consider carrying their own travel size bottle of hand washing gel.

- **Environmental Cleaning**

Because the virus can survive on environmental surfaces (up to 48 hours on hard surfaces) frequent cleaning can reduce the spread of the virus in the home or at workstations. Cleaning should take place using common household disinfectants. In office settings, the building cleaners should not be relied upon to do this level of cleaning. It is best to allocate time for staff to thoroughly clean their own areas, especially if they share workspaces or work in areas where the public are served. See Appendix 7 for suggested disinfectants, recommended use and precautions.