



**MILWAUKEE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Pandemic Response Plan**  
*Updated October 2009*

# Pandemic Response Plan

## Milwaukee Public Schools

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# Introduction

In the summer of 2009, the U.S. Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services recommended that school districts take immediate steps to be prepared in the event of extended school closings due to the possibility of a severe outbreak of H1N1 (Swine Flu.)

Whether there is anticipation of H1N1, or another strain of flu or illness, proper planning is critical. We quote from the key online resource for Wisconsin school and health officials, [www.pandemic.wisconsin.gov](http://www.pandemic.wisconsin.gov),

*According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), when pandemic flu happens in the United States, as many as 4 in 10 school-age children could become sick. Many teachers and staff members would also be ill or need to care for sick family members, and not be able to report to work. The effects on our schools could be staggering. In some cases, schools may be required to close for an extended period of time.*

The Milwaukee Public Schools district recognizes that this is not a time for fear, but instead, a time for preparation.

The MPS Pandemic Response Plan is an ever-evolving document; it will be updated if/when pandemic illness evolves in the community and our needs change.

- Kathleen Murphy, Coordinator of Health Services
- Roseann St. Aubin, Communications Director



# Structure

The following list is comprised of the facts and protocols that provide a structure for decision making in Milwaukee Public Schools as a result of a health crisis such as the existence of pandemic flu.

- The health and safety of MPS students and staff are our primary concern.
- Continuity of MPS operations during a crisis such as pandemic illness is of critical value to the City of Milwaukee. Reasons include educational services for 82,000 students, more than 200 strategically located and accessible facilities, full-time employment for 11,000 workers and the daily (or twice daily) provision of food to the economically disadvantaged children who make up 81% of the student population.
- The Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) coordinates pandemic planning for the city as a whole through its *City of Milwaukee Health Department Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan*. The State of Wisconsin published its plan *Wisconsin Pandemic Influenza Operations Plan* in 2007. Our Response Plan activities are consistent with the city and state plans and our actual responses in an emergency will often be guided by these higher authorities.
- The MHD has the authority to declare a public health emergency.
- The Commissioner of Health (MHD) can direct the closing of schools.
- The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has determined that when a local health official orders the closing of schools due to a health emergency, the days a school is closed count toward the required 180 days of instruction.
- The MPS Superintendent can direct the closure of a school or schools in the district due to high counts of student or staff illness that make the operation of classes difficult, ill-advised or inefficient.

- Decisions regarding operation or closure of individual schools or facilities are made after a careful review of that facility's unique staffing levels, the quality of the programming that would remain and most importantly, safety of the students and staff.
  - We are unable to use a formula approach that provides a cut-off using percentages of available staff or students, since individual school operations vary widely.
  - A school's daily count of influenza-like illness cases will trigger administrative review of continued operation.
- As per the **Emergency School Closing Procedures, 2009-2010 School Year**, when MPS schools are closed, all afternoon and evening recreation, Community Learning Centers (CLCs) and interscholastic athletics/academics are cancelled.
- The district will make all efforts to continue instruction of students to assist in the meeting of graduation requirements, WKCE-CRT schedule, and other instructional mileposts. Instruction will continue through MPS Sofa School efforts.
- All MPS critical communications destined for families and students shall be translated from English into Spanish and Hmong and best efforts shall be made to release all language versions simultaneously.
- Methods of delivery for communication with families shall vary so as not to rely heavily on one form (such as the Internet) to the detriment of those families who do not have ready access.
- During a pandemic response, employee compensation, benefits and other work issues shall be determined by the negotiated labor agreements that are in place at the time.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the MHD provide guidance/recommendations on levels of cleaning and/or sanitation required at all levels of pandemic response.

# Internal Response Team

The Internal Response Team for pandemic flu initially convened in spring of 2009 with the onset of H1N1 in MPS schools, leading to the decision by the City of Milwaukee Health Commissioner to close more than a dozen MPS sites, some of them for more than a week.

The Team reconvened in June 2009 to prepare for a second sweep of H1N1, or other related illness. All Team members are MPS administrators.

Superintendent William G. Andrekopoulos  
Health Coordinator Kathleen Murphy  
Communications Director Roseann St. Aubin  
Information and Technology Director James Davis  
Parent and Student Services Director Jennie Dorsey  
Human Resources Director Deborah Ford  
Labor Relations Director Therese Freiberg  
Labor Relations Specialist Cleophis Rucker  
Benefits and Insurance Director Christine Toth  
Facilities & Maintenance Director Gina Spang  
School Nutrition Director Kymm Mutch  
Education Services Director Catherine Thome  
DIFI/SIFI Director Marcia Staum  
Instructional Support, Thomas Hanley  
Administrative Accountability Director Anita Pietrykowski  
Administrative Specialist Keith Posley  
Community & Diversified Schools Director Kristi Cole  
Special Services Director Patricia Yahle  
Chief Financial Officer Michelle Nate  
Recreation and Community Services Director Molly Barrett  
Recreation and Community Services Operations Manager Lynn Greb  
Media Specialist Philip Harris  
Office of Board Governance, Board Clerk Lynne Sobczak

# Partnerships

The MHD is the primary partner with MPS in addressing matters of health involving MPS families. The MHD pandemic response plan provides surveillance, vaccine delivery, and use of antivirals, health services, emergency services, and communications. *MPS planning assumes MHD broader oversight of community health issues.*

In addition to the MHD, other partners include state agencies that focus on instruction and health and also our local partners who provide health services in MPS school sites. Our significant partners are:

## **Milwaukee Health Department (MHD)**

Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker

Administration Office

Frank P. Zeidler Municipal Building

841 North Broadway, 3rd Floor

Milwaukee, WI 53202-3653

Phone: (414)286-3521

Communications, Kawanza Newson (414) 286-3548 / (414) 732-7250

Operations Manager Raquel Filmanowicz (414) 286-3175 / (414) 397-1614

*MHD's pandemic flu plan is posted online at:*

<http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/healthAuthors/DCP/PDFs/PanFluV4Public.pdf>

## **Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health**

Secretary Karen Timberlake

1 West Wilson Street

Madison, WI 53702

Phone (608) 266-1865

Regional Director Robert Harris (608) 227-4910

Communications Stephanie Marquis, (608) 266-1683

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/>

## **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

State Superintendent Tony Evers

125 S. Webster Street

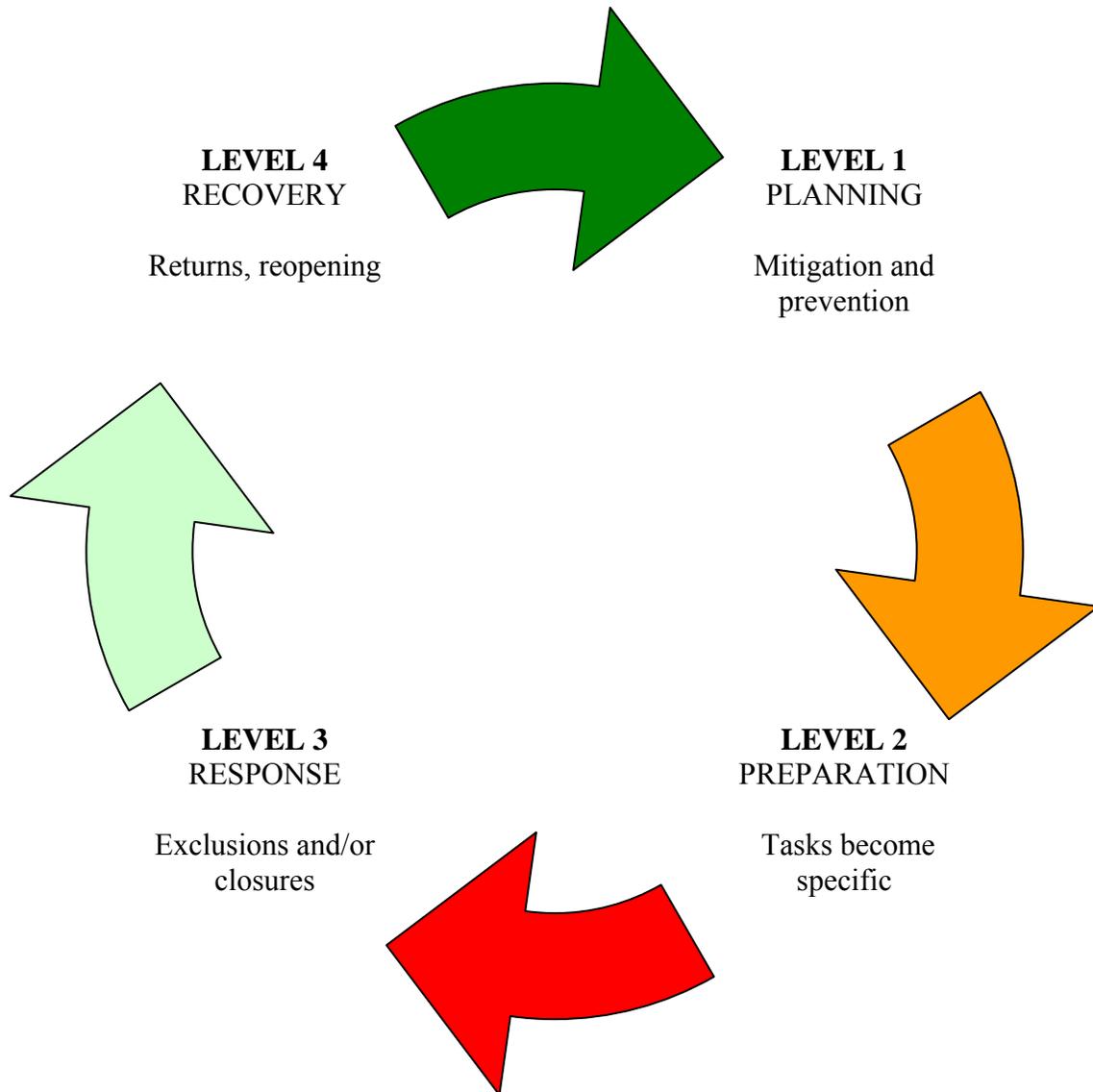
P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841

Phone (800) 441-4563

Communications Officer Patrick Gasper (608) 266-3559

<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/>

# Levels of Engagement



**Level 1 – Planning.** This phase is a time of prevention and mitigation. There is no change in the management of MPS schools and facilities. Prevention messages included in letters to families and fact sheets for staff are distributed. The Internal Planning Team meets frequently for discussion.

**Activities include:**

1. Internal Planning team is activated; establishes regular schedule for discussion.

2. City of Milwaukee pandemic flu plan is reviewed. Relationships are reaffirmed; contact information exchanged.
3. Letter is sent to families in multiple languages offering information and lists of resources and they are asked to plan in the event of school closings.
4. Identification is made of supplies to be provided to schools.
5. Vendor lists are reviewed; assessments are made regarding continuity of supplies and services.
6. Human Resources, Education Services begin planning for continuity of site operations.
7. Staff fact sheet is revised per wording of negotiated labor agreements using CDC and MHD guidance.
8. Technology plans data collection for tracking of ILI (Influenza-Like Illness).
9. Health Services Coordinator provides H1N1 information update during annual school nurses' in-service.
10. Tutorial on ILI tracking is devised for school leaders, provided in e-mail to all sites.
11. Preferred communications materials and venues are identified.
12. District spokespersons are identified.
13. Key messages are drafted.
14. Media outreach is planned; interviews and outreach are ongoing.
15. Sofa School elements are conceptualized (for learning-in-place).
16. Local charity is identified for provision of food assistance to families in the event of extended student absences.
17. Cleaning/disinfection at school sites is aligned with CDC, MHD guidance as it may evolve.
18. Board of School Directors is informed of planning activities.

**Level 2 – Preparation.** This phase is a time of preparedness as cases of illness may have been noted in the community. Planning activities become specific. Protocols are established for the reporting and tracking of Influenza-Like Illness in MPS sites. Regular communication is established with the City of Milwaukee Health Department. The Internal Planning Team members execute tasks that help their departments and the entire district to be prepared. Communications materials are readied.

**Activities include:**

1. Internal response team members carry out individual tasks.

2. Supplies of hand sanitizer, hygiene posters and other materials are distributed to schools and other MPS facilities.
3. ILI tracking for students and staff begins in the schools; weekly reports are provided to the Internal Team and the MHD.
4. Exclusion letter templates are made available to all school leaders and school nurses in multiple languages.
5. Communication with vendors and other district stakeholders continues in effort to prepare for the continuity of operation.
6. Health Services Coordinator actively monitors CDC, Wisconsin DPH and MHD for updates.
7. All contact information for members of Internal Response Team is updated and circulated.
8. MPS Portal homepage is loaded with documents in multiple languages for Students/Families and Staff. Instructional materials for teachers (hygiene lesson plans at all grade levels) are also provided on MPS Portal. Social media venues are utilized.
9. Families and staff are notified that the district is in Level 2 Preparation stage.
10. Key messages are circulated to district spokespeople, administrators and the Board of School Directors.
11. Human Resources review of staffing requirements per MPS site to gauge appropriateness/efficiency of continuing operations with percentages of staff/students out with ILI.
12. MPS provides site tours of district buildings and identifies the extent of district support available for MHD mass vaccination efforts.
13. Eligible MPS nurses and Health Care Assistants are notified as to availability of H1N1 vaccine distributed by the MHD.
14. Parent/guardian release forms for H1N1 vaccinations at MHD clinics are received and prepared in multiple languages for distribution.
15. Communications Director monitors other districts' activities with assistance of Council of Great City Schools and Wisconsin School Public Relations Association listservs; resources and best practices are shared.
16. Instructional staff identifies specific tasks, locations, staff and resources for Sofa School operations.
17. Human Resources works collaboratively with Information Technology and Finance to identify and implement structure to continue critical district operations.

18. Surveillance activities are accelerated as required by case evidence.
19. Cleaning, disinfection of school sites continues to be aligned with CDC and MHD guidance.
20. Board of School Directors is informed of preparation activities.

**Level 3 – Response.** Cases of student or staff illness are noted; the number of cases and/or severity warrant specific responses such as exclusions from MPS sites or closure of sites. A centralized command structure is identified within the district to ensure that communication with students, families and staff is consistent.

**Activities include:**

1. Surveillance activities (through ILI tracking and absence reports) are accelerated as required by case evidence. Daily reports are shared with the Internal Response Team.
2. Information flow between MHD and MPS is accelerated and number of exclusions is reviewed daily.
3. Health Services Coordinator continues daily monitoring of CDC, MHD and other agency guidance.
4. Students and staff showing ILI symptoms are masked at school while waiting in a designated, separate area for pickup.
5. Human Resources makes daily review of staffing levels at schools to determine efficacy of continued operations.
6. **Closures of sites and cancellations of activities may be ordered by Health Commissioner or Superintendent.**
7. Families and staff are notified that the district is now in Level 3 Response stage of the plan.
8. District command center structure may be initiated; district may alternately provide a representative for citywide emergency government structure.
9. Frequent, perhaps daily, communication to families is done in multiple languages using multiple venues. Most direct: recorded messages on automatic dialer system (ParentLink). Social media outlets such as Twitter are utilized.
10. Sofa School activities are now in place with potential distribution of educational materials to homebound students. Food may be distributed with educational packets with the assistance of local charity.

11. Human Resources continues to work collaboratively with Information Technology and Finance to identify and implement structure to continue critical district operations, perhaps with employees telecommuting.
12. MPS school counselors and/or grief counselors assist as needed as impact of the illness mounts.
13. MPS facilities are identified by the MHD or other City of Milwaukee entity for use in pandemic control or response.

**Level 4 – Recovery.** The Superintendent, working with the Internal Response Team and with the guidance of the MHD as appropriate, establishes the schedule for a return to regular activities in schools or other MPS facilities. The schedule accommodates time for preparation of buildings, the return of employees, the proper notification of families and the provision of grief counseling if necessary.

**Activities include:**

1. Surveillance of illness in students and staff shows declining case numbers.
2. Direct communications between MPS Administration and MHD leadership are focused on timeline and tasks for return to routine operations.
3. Health Services Coordinator continues to monitor guidance of CDC, MHD and other authorities regarding disease trending.
4. Sites are prepared (cleaning, disinfection) per guidance of the CDC and MHD.
5. Communications with families and staff now include messaging for requirements for the return to school sites.
6. Students and staff not exhibiting symptoms are allowed to return to sites per requirements of MHD and MPS.
7. MPS school counselors and/or grief counselors assist as needed.
8. Planning and preparation is ongoing for additional waves of illness.
9. DPI to assist in determining course of action and the impacts of extended loss of in-school instruction time.
10. Internal Response Team conducts formal debriefing to identify areas for improvement in district pandemic response.



*FACT:*

Cleaning during the recovery phase was important for MPS in spring 2009. MPS Facilities personnel took the extra effort because they care about the comfort of students and staff who will return to the buildings once the health commissioner gives the okay. “I had more than enough staff who wanted to do the work today. A lot of our personnel have children in these schools, too. They really do care,” said Mike Gutierrez, Project Manager, Buildings, Grounds & Fleet.

# Critical Messages

The Milwaukee Public Schools will embrace a set of critical messages for families and staff to guard against pandemic illness, and to remember during responses to a pandemic. Core messages reinforce good daily hygiene.

## *Families should make these steps part of their daily routines:*

- Wash hands frequently and regularly.
- Cover your cough. Cough into your upper sleeve or into a tissue and discard properly.
- Learn the flu symptoms — fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache and body aches.
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick and see a doctor if symptoms persist. *Do not send a sick child to school or daycare.*
- Update all immunizations.
- Be certain the child's school has the family's current contact information, including telephone numbers.

## *To prepare for serious outbreaks of illness, or the event of a pandemic, families should:*

- Develop a plan if a child becomes sick and needs to stay home, or if a child's school is closed.
- Talk to the child about illnesses such as the flu to decrease fear and to ensure he or she has accurate information.
- When new vaccines become available, see that children get the immunization. MPS regularly shares information on availability of vaccinations.
- Find out where to receive food assistance if a child's school is closed and the family has no access to school meals.
- If there is no regular access to a doctor, take time to learn about health clinics and other resources available in the City of Milwaukee.
- Apply for Badgercare coverage if the family is without healthcare. **Call Badgercare at (800) 362-3002 to apply.** There are some eligibility rules. Badgercare is Wisconsin's comprehensive health care program for families who are income-eligible.

# Sample Parent Letter – Exclusion for ILI



**MILWAUKEE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child is being sent home today with the following symptoms of the influenza like illness (circled):

Fever

Cough

Sore Throat

**Please keep your child at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100<sup>0</sup>F or greater.)** This is typically 3-5 days. If the child continues to have a fever, he or she should stay home until they have been without a fever for 24 hours, even if that takes longer than five days.

Here are some additional precautions:

- Cover all coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of all tissues in waste containers. Cough or sneeze into your shirtsleeve if a tissue is not available. Always wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol based hand cleaner, especially after coughing, sneezing, and blowing one's nose.
- Avoid touching of nose, mouth, and eyes, to reduce the spread of germs.
- Keep ill family members home from school or work. Household members that are NOT ill may go to school or work.
- Contact your health care provider for follow up and if you have further questions.

Thank you. We hope your child feels better soon.

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

©MPS Division of Health Services

# Sample News Release



Milwaukee Public Schools

Immediate Release

## Four MPS schools closed due to swine flu investigation

By order of the Milwaukee Health Department, four MPS schools are closed until further notice. The schools include three elementary schools on the south side of the city, and one large high school on the east side of Milwaukee. The schools are:

**Riverside University High School**, 1615 East Locust Street

**Clement Avenue School**, 3666 South Clement Avenue

**Mitchell School**, 1728 South 23<sup>rd</sup> Street

**Rogers Street Academy**, 2430 West Rogers Street

The closures affect all programming at the four sites, including Head Start programs, athletic activities, and before- and after-school programs. The closure at Rogers Street Academy also includes the Don and Sallie Davis Boys and Girls Club that is attached to the school.

There will be no student attendance at the schools until further notice. Staff members who work at these schools are asked to stay home. If students and/or staff are exhibiting flu-like symptoms, they are advised to seek advice from a health care provider. We ask our families and staff to seek additional information on the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) Web site at <http://www.milwaukee.gov/health>. The MHD also has a hotline at (414) 286-3616.

MPS families should be advised that if their school is not listed as closed, they should continue their routines of coming to class at their respective schools. MPS principals and staff will continue to reinforce preventative measures, such as good cough etiquette and hand-washing.

MPS asks that all questions regarding specific medical cases or patients be directed to the Milwaukee Health Department. For more information on MPS closures and district routines, please call Roseann St. Aubin, Communications Director, (414) 475-8237, or on mobile phone at (414) 531-0213.

*Believe it!*  
*Achieve it!*

Office of Communications and Public Affairs

5225 W. Vliet St., P.O. Box 2181 ■ Milwaukee, WI 53201-2181

Phone: (414) 475-8237 ■ FAX: (414) 475-8430 ■ E-mail: [537@mail.milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:537@mail.milwaukee.k12.wi.us)

## Sample ParentLink Message

This is an urgent message from Milwaukee Public Schools.

Your child's school, Mitchell School, has been ordered closed by the City of Milwaukee Health Commissioner.

The closure is due to the fact that a confirmed case of H1N1 (or Swine Flu) has been identified in a student.

That student is resting at home. No additional cases have been identified. If your child shows flu-like symptoms, please keep the child home. If symptoms persist, consult a doctor.

Mitchell School will be closed until further notice.

You will receive a recorded message from MPS when the school reopens. We will also provide any reopening message to TV and radio stations and feature it on our Web site homepage.

Thank you.

(Message to be translated, recorded in Spanish and sent simultaneously with English version to those families identified in MPS database as speaking Spanish in the home.)



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# Resources

MPS Portal – a chronological listing of documents under the categories of Students/Families, Staff and Instructional Resources.

<http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=360&PageID=38554&cached=true&mode=2>



Milwaukee Health Department Flu Resources and immunization information.

<http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/health>



Wisconsin Pandemic Flu resources, a Web site that is primarily maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Public Health.

<http://pandemic.wisconsin.gov/>



Pandemic Influenza information from the U.S. Government.

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)