

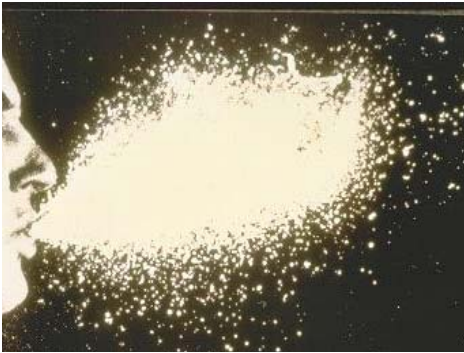


Jefferson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE)

Public Health Preparedness Program

Planning and Preparing for Potential of Pandemic Flu . . .

Detecting, Containing, Controlling and Preventing Spread of Influenza



Public health experts around the world are warning of the possibility of an influenza or "flu" pandemic.¹ The alarm comes with the spread of a particular strain of bird flu, H5N1, throughout Southeast Asia's bird population. Since 1997, the virus has also infected and killed at least 54 persons. If the "avian" or bird flu virus combines with an influenza virus that commonly infects humans to create a new influenza virus, the world may face an influenza pandemic. This is believed to have occurred in 1918, causing the Spanish Flu Pandemic that killed as many as 40 million people worldwide and at least 500,000 in the United States alone. Experts agree that the probability of this happening again is high, although no one can predict when it will happen.

Due to the highly infectious nature of such a new virus, experts warn that the number of persons affected will be high, even today with improvements in health care response. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that

between 89,000 and 207,000 people could die in the U.S. alone.

Adding to the problem is that people will have little or no immunity to this new virus and it will take time to develop a vaccine against it. When antiviral medications and vaccine do become available, the supply will most likely not meet the demand. Public health will have the responsibility of prioritizing groups who should receive medications or vaccine first i.e., persons essential to saving as many

Because vaccine may not immediately be available or in short supply, initial public health efforts must focus on determining who is already sick and who may be most at risk for becoming sick from their exposure to ill individuals. While initially well, or not showing symptoms, these "exposed," individuals also pose a major risk for spread of disease to others. Voluntary and mandatory isolation or quarantine are steps that would be taken to re-

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move these individuals from further contact with the public until they are no longer infectious, or at high risk of becoming infectious. Large numbers of health worker teams will be required to track these patients and their symptoms. This will ensure those who are ill

get treatment as available and remain in voluntary (or mandatory) isolation at home, while those who have been in contact with

lives as possible, such as healthcare workers and first responders and other individuals at highest risk.

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Local Health Response:

- Implementing voluntary or court-ordered isolation or quarantine
- Acquiring, distributing and dispensing antiviral medications and vaccines when they become available through mass clinics.
- Coordinating regional public health and medical efforts (Jefferson, Clear Creek, Gilpin Counties)
- Public Information, Education and Risk Communication

1. A **pandemic** is an epidemic occurring over a very wide area (several countries or continents) and usually affecting a large proportion of the population. An epidemic is an outbreak of disease that far exceeds what is expected.

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the sick and are at risk of becoming ill and spreading infection to others, stay confined through voluntary or mandatory quarantine. Through these “surveillance” efforts, those ill or at risk of infecting others can be effectively monitored and advised when they are safely able to return to work or to the community at large. Under exceptional circumstances, individuals who pose high risk of community spread and who are unwilling to remain under voluntary confinement would be placed under court-ordered mandatory quarantine (see box at right).

These prevention efforts will also include comprehensive efforts to educate the public about the steps they can take

themselves to decrease spread of disease: frequent and thorough handwashing, covering mouth and nose before coughing or sneezing, disinfecting shared surfaces in living spaces (e.g., bathrooms) with dilute bleach solutions or other commercial products, and using a tissue that is properly disposed, after use.



Washing hands regularly is still one of the best defenses against communicable disease.

JCDHE will receive medications and vaccines when they are available, from the Colorado Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and dispense them to the public following priority group guidelines through mass prophylaxis clinics, also called points of dispensation or PODs. With a limited number of public health staff and a population of approximately 535,000 in Jefferson County, this will require collaboration with state and regional public health professionals and further emphasizes the importance of initial efforts to remove individuals at risk of disease spread from contact with others until they can no longer spread the virus.

In June 2005, JCDHE’s Emergency Preparedness Program oriented 63 nurses who have volunteered to assist JCDHE staff in the event of a public health emergency in Gilpin, Clear Creek or Jefferson County.

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JCDHE Public

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So Just What Are Isolation and Quarantine?

Local Health departments have statutory authority to “establish, maintain and enforce isolation and quarantine...and to exercise such physical control over property and the persons of the people within this state...”

Colorado Revised Statute 25-1.5-102 (1) (c)

- ◆ **Isolation** is the separation and restriction of movement or activities of persons who are infected with a contagious disease and are **ill or showing symptoms**. Isolation is intended to prevent the ill person from transmitting disease to others. Isolation is required until the person no longer has symptoms, has had effective treatment or the period of communicability (time when disease is contagious) is over.
- ◆ **Quarantine** is the separation and restriction of movement or activities of persons who are **not ill** but are believed to have been exposed to infection. Quarantine is intended to prevent persons presumed to have been exposed to a contagious disease from transmitting disease to others. Quarantine is required until the incubation period is over. The incubation period is the amount of time between infection with a virus or bacteria to the start of symptoms. Quarantine may change to isolation if the person develops symptoms and becomes ill.

Quarantine Enforcement Sequence

- ◆ Verbal order requesting voluntary compliance.
- ◆ Written administrative order given to specific individuals to stay in a specific place for a period of time.
- ◆ Disobeying a health department order is also a misdemeanor criminal offense. *c.r.s. 25-1-114(4) and 514(4)*
- ◆ If a person does not comply with written order, then health officials may seek a court order requiring compliance. *c.r.s.25-1-112 and 512*
- ◆ A healthcare worker evaluates the contact on a regular basis (at least daily) by phone and/or in person for signs and symptoms suggestive of disease.