



Preparing for a flu pandemic

September 2009

Pacific Blue Cross has taken a proactive approach to ensure that all critical business processes continue during the pandemic so that we continue to provide essential services to our members.

Pacific Blue Cross has been closely monitoring information about Influenza A (H1N1) aka Swine Flu. As we approach the fall, the impact of the pending influenza season cannot be predicted with a high degree of certainty. However, various agencies are anticipating more communities will be affected by an outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1) in the fall/winter than were in the spring/summer 2009, reflecting wider transmission and possibly greater impact. The World Health Organization (WHO) raised the level of the H1N1 influenza pandemic alert to Phase 6 on June 11, 2009. We are now in the earliest days of a pandemic.

In anticipation of the fall influenza season, Pacific Blue Cross has taken a proactive approach to ensure that all critical business processes continue during the pandemic so that we continue to provide essential services to our members. We have a comprehensive and flexible pandemic plan that escalates our level of preparedness and action as the pandemic experiences any increase in severity.

Business continuity planning usually envisions a physical disaster such as fire, tornado or power failure. Planning for these scenarios assumes that most employees will be available to work and the disaster will be short-lived. Planning for a pandemic includes the possibility that, at its peak, 25–50% of employees may be off work for various reasons. For example sickness, caring for sick family members, caring for children who are no longer in school due to school closure, employees who are afraid to come to work or, in extreme cases, death. A pandemic could last 12 to 18 months with 2 to 4 waves of illness each lasting 6 to 12 weeks occurring in that time period.

Pandemic planning not only requires identification of critical business functions, it is also necessary to identify the individual employees who perform them and develop contingencies in case they are not available to provide service.

We're ready >>>

We're ready.

Our pandemic planning and response team has considered the potential impact to our operations and has already initialized key elements of the plan.

To date we have:

- Identified critical business functions and anticipated our ability to provide service in the event of pandemic.
- Implemented a program of cross-training employees to back up critical business functions
- Planned the logistics of implementing alternate work arrangements that enable employees to work from home.
- Identified critical suppliers and discussed necessary actions for the continuity of critical business functions during a pandemic.

Since a pandemic may potentially impact the health of employees and their families, we have policies and procedures in place that support their well being while still supporting the requirement to ensure that critical business functions continue.

We have taken measures to minimize the risk of the disease spreading within our organization by:

- Reviewing our Human Resource policies on sick leave and other absences, in addition to establishing policies on hygiene, social distancing and travel.
- Initiating a comprehensive communication strategy to keep employees, clients, advisors and members informed about our pandemic plan and preventive strategies to protect the spread of illness.

We'll continue to provide more information as it becomes available. To keep up to date visit:

www.pac.bluecross.ca/pandemic

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