



Pandemic Influenza Business Continuity Planning for Managers, Chairs and Directors

[McMaster Pandemic Influenza Guide](#) provides detailed information to students, employees and visitors about the H1N1 Influenza pandemic and McMaster's initiatives to prevent the spread of the virus. Regular updates and the following documents are available at [McMaster's Flu Information Website](#):

- [Self-Screening Tool](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Provincial Guidelines for 2009 Influenza Virus - Colleges & Universities](#)
- [H1N1 Symptom Reporting Tool for Students](#)
- [H1N1 Symptom Reporting Tool for Employees](#)

This document is provided as a supplement to the documents listed above to provide Managers, Chairs and Directors with more specific information to assist in their planning for and management during the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic. The information provided for managing the H1N1 Influenza Virus in the workplace is based on current knowledge of the H1N1 pandemic in Ontario and on current guidelines from local, provincial and national health authorities. Updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

Throughout this document we refer to Influenza-like Illness (ILI). ILI may be H1N1 or seasonal flu. We are not distinguishing between the two but rather are implementing measures to manage the spread of both.

I. Communicating Information

Managers, Chairs and Directors have an important role to play in communicating influenza-related information to employees. Meetings with staff and faculty should be held to discuss the influenza virus and any operational questions. Where any individual or department is concerned about potential exposure to influenza, self-care and self-isolation should be discussed at a general level with those expressing concerns. Managers should also:

PROMOTE HYGIENE AND INFECTION CONTROL:

- Ensure hand-washing signs are visible in washrooms and other areas throughout your department where hygiene and infection control is especially important. To the extent possible, ensure hand-washing protocols are followed. McMaster's Hand Hygiene and Stop the Spread posters are available [here](#).

- Hand sanitizing stations have been set up in each campus building and should be highlighted to employees. Additional hand sanitizers are available through University stores.

CONVEY THE IMPORTANCE OF NOTIFYING MANAGEMENT: Advise employees that if they become sick with Influenza-like symptoms they are to contact their Manager, Chair or Director to advise them they have influenza-like symptoms and that they will be remaining at home. Explain the absence reporting and information requirements as noted in Section III Managing Employees with Influenza-like symptoms.

II. Business Continuity Planning

The University's Business Continuity Committee, led by the VP Administration and the Dean of Social Sciences and including representation from such areas of the University as the Provost's office, Student Affairs, Human Resources Services, Health and Safety and the Office of the Registrar, meets on a regular basis to monitor the status of H1N1 Influenza virus and to oversee continuity preparations for the University.

The University's Crisis Management Group will oversee the University's response in the event of a pandemic outbreak. Information on the Crisis Management Group and the Crisis Response Plan are available [here](#).

The Business Continuity planning documents have been developed to assist in the preparation for continuation of operations in the event of a pandemic or other emergency. These documents include:

- [RMM 1206 Business Continuity Plan](#)
- [Business Continuity Workbook](#)
- [Business Continuity Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

Managers, Chairs and Directors are asked to review these documents and to prepare Business Continuity plans for their areas of responsibility. These Business Continuity plans and workbooks should be communicated to employees. Meetings with staff and faculty should be held to discuss the influenza virus and any operational questions.

During a Pandemic the focus of the Business Continuity Plan is on ensuring that the work of each unit/division can continue despite higher than normal levels of absenteeism. Some important aspects include:

A. Employee emergency contact information

Departments should ensure they have access to employee emergency contact information. Since this is personal information, it should be accessible only to those employees who require it and must be stored in a secure place.

B. Developing and communicating a reporting process for employees who are ill or not attending work

While many departments have a current absenteeism reporting practice, it is recommended that managers review this practice to ensure that it is working effectively and will continue to work effectively in the event of the manager's

absence. The reporting process should be communicated to all employees within the department.

C. Enabling Access to Work Related Information and Systems

Managers should have plans in place to ensure that necessary documents and electronic files can be accessed even when staff are absent. To ensure access to filing cabinets, and/or on-site storage areas, employees should know who has the keys or access codes to these areas and where they are stored or who to contact for access. Employees should store the keys and access codes in a secure place at their work location. Managers should also ensure mechanisms are in place to enable access to critical electronic information and systems when staff are absent.

D. Develop a critical supplies list and stockpile

The University depends on hundreds of suppliers. During an interruption some suppliers may not be able to continue with the normal production and shipping capacities. If these supplies are deemed critical, an alternative supplier should be found prior to an emergency to ensure your activity can continue. All institutions and businesses need to stockpile supplies to ensure they could continue in some capacity as they proceed through the emergency as well as continue with their business recovery plan. Part of your proactive strategy should include a minimum of a two week supply of essential items.

III. Managing Employees with Influenza-like symptoms

H1N1 Influenza like illness is *the acute onset of respiratory symptoms with fever and cough and one or more of the following symptoms: sore throat, muscle aches, joint pain, or weakness. Gastrointestinal symptoms may also be present and fever may not be prominent.*

What to do if an employee reports Influenza-like symptoms:

- A. Employees exhibiting Influenza-like symptoms should go home. If the manager feels the employee is not well enough to go home on his/her own, the employee should arrange to be taken home by a friend or family member. In all cases, the health and safety of the employee must be considered first.
- B. Ask the employee to complete the online Self Reporting tool. (This reporting tool is being finalized and will be posted on the University's Flu Information page once available.) Information will be collected and compiled by the University's Occupational Health Nurse and will be used only to identify clusters of cases based on aggregate data and to determine the impact of the H1N1 Influenza illness on the University. Email alerts will also be sent to the employee's supervisor. Employees are also to follow their normal departmental reporting protocols to advise their supervisors if they are to be absent.
- C. Stay in contact with the employee and ask him/her to provide a phone number where he/she can be reached and update you regularly. If the employee was sent home from work, the manager may wish to call the

employee to ensure s/he got home safely. Update telephone calls may be initiated by either the manager or the employee, depending on how the employee is feeling. The manager may ask the employee when s/he expects to return to work.

- D. If there is concern that there is spread of the disease in the work area, supervisors may contact the Facility Services desk at ext 24740, or the appropriate offsite facilities contact, to initiate a request for enhanced cleaning. This protocol will only be initiated if certain criteria are met.
- E. Employees exhibiting Influenza-like symptoms should not return to work until 24 hours after symptoms have improved or the fever is gone without the aid of any medication. Supervisors should note that some individuals may experience a cough for days to weeks after infection. In accordance with direction from Public Health, presence of a cough in the absence of other symptoms should not prevent employees from returning to work.
- F. Before returning to work the employee must notify his/her direct supervisor.

Absence Reporting Requirements

Established absence reporting protocols are to remain in effect for employees who report Influenza-like illnesses.

Individuals suffering from mild influenza-like symptoms may be told by Public Health or by their physician not to visit a physician's office. Therefore during this pandemic period the University will not normally require a medical note in relation to such short term absences. The University does, however, reserve the right to require a medical note under some circumstances.

The current practices and provisions with respect to medical notes for absences unrelated to H1N1 Influenza-like illnesses will continue.

In all cases, absences of 10 days or more will be managed in accordance with the University's salary continuance and Return to Work protocols. Individuals who are ill for this extended time period may be experiencing complications due to the influenza virus, and should be consulting with their health care provider. Supervisors must contact Employee Health Services to report any absences of 10 days or more.

Employees will be eligible for sick leave benefits in accordance with the sick leave provisions contained in their respective collective agreement, or their individual terms and conditions of employment, as may be applicable.

Please contact your Employee/Labour Relations Advisor or HR Consultant if you have further questions on these issues.

Privacy Concerns

The fact that an employee has influenza-like symptoms is generally considered to be personal information under provincial privacy legislation. This information should not be shared with co-workers unless the employee chooses to do so themselves.

What to do if a co-worker has concerns about another employee who they believe is displaying one or more of influenza like symptoms:

While Managers, Chairs and Directors are not in a position to diagnose illnesses, it is their responsibility to ensure a safe work environment.

Talk with the staff/faculty member in private and ask them if he/she is feeling unwell. If so, ask him/her if they are aware of the influenza symptoms and the measures that should be taken to reduce the spread of the influenza virus. Employees may be provided with information from Public Health or the University's self screening tool, and asked to remain home if their symptoms suggest influenza. If they are feeling well or believe they do not have H1N1 influenza like symptoms, advise the co-worker that you understand the staff/faculty member to be free of the influenza virus.

IV. Managing Absences and Requests for Leaves

While classes and activities of the University are expected to continue during the pandemic, greater levels of employee absenteeism are expected. This heightened level of absenteeism may be due to the requirement for employees to care for an ill family member, or as a result of the closure of a school or the unavailability of a daycare/eldercare provider. Managers are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in responding to specific requests from employees as they address their family responsibilities, subject to operational requirements.

Employees in these situations may choose to utilize one of the leaves available to them under the terms of their respective collective agreement or individual employment contract, including time off in lieu of overtime, personal leave days or vacation.

During a pandemic, alternate work arrangements may also be applied, including:

- Working at home or "teleworking"
- Compressed work week
- Flexible hours
- Staggered hours

Where these options are not part of the normal work arrangements, and prior to introducing these options, managers are encouraged to contact their Employee/Labour Relations Advisor or HR Consultant to ensure compliance with collective agreements and/or policies.

V. Important Information Resources at McMaster University

This section provides important McMaster University contact information to assist you in your efforts for preparedness.

[McMaster University Flu Information Updates](#)

[Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services](#)

[Employee Health Services](#)

The Occupational Health Nurse may be emailed directly at gibbong@mcmaster.ca

[Campus Health Services \(Students\)](#)

VII. Additional Information Resources

This section is a resource tool in order to aid in your efforts for preparedness. The following are overviews and links to these resources.

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

The WHO is the United Nations specialized agency for health. The WHO is the global leader in pandemic preparedness.

[Health Canada](#)

Health Canada is the Federal department responsible for helping Canadians maintain and improve their health, while respecting individual choices and circumstances. Health Canada, in partnership with provinces and territories, has a plan in place to ensure appropriate steps are taken to protect Canadians from a pandemic.

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

In the event of a pandemic or any other infectious disease, the Public Health Agency of Canada is the lead organization for coordinating the health response.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

The CDC is committed to achieving true improvements in people's lives by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability.

[Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety \(CCOHS\)](#)

A Pandemic planning website that offers helpful documents and tools.

[The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care \(MOHLTC\)](#)

The ministry is responsible for administering the health care system and providing services to the Ontario public. Their website contains The 2008 Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic.

[City of Hamilton](#)

Public Health Services has developed a Hamilton Community Pandemic Plan.