

**PANDEMIC INFLUENZA RESPONSE PLAN**  
**CHATHAM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**April 1, 2006**  
**Version 3**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Severe influenza pandemics represent one of the greatest potential threats to the public's health. Pandemics are distinct from seasonal influenza epidemics that happen nearly every year, causing an average of 36,000 deaths annually in the United States. Seasonal influenza epidemics are caused by influenza viruses which circulate around the world. Over time, people develop some degree of immunity to these viruses, and vaccines are developed annually to protect people from serious illness. Pandemic influenza refers to a worldwide epidemic due to a new, dramatically different strain of influenza virus. A pandemic virus strain can spread rapidly from person to person and, if severe, can cause high levels of disease and death around the world. Pandemic viruses develop in two main ways. First, wild birds are the reservoir for all influenza viruses. Most avian influenza viruses do not infect or cause significant disease in humans. However, new pandemic influenza viruses can arise when avian influenza viruses acquire the ability to infect and cause disease in humans, and then spread rapidly from person to person. Second, all influenza viruses experience frequent, slight changes to their genetic structure over time. This necessitates a change in annual vaccines to protect against seasonal influenza. Occasionally, however, influenza viruses undergo a major change in genetic composition through the combination of an avian and human virus.

The creation of a novel virus means that most, if not all, people in the world will have never been exposed to the new strain and have no immunity to the disease. It also means that new vaccines must be developed and therefore are not likely to be available for months, during which time many people could become infected and seriously ill.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three pandemics occurred that spread worldwide within a year. The influenza pandemic of 1918 was especially virulent, killing a large number of young, otherwise healthy adults. It is now known that this pandemic was caused by an avian influenza virus that suddenly developed the ability to infect humans and to easily spread from person to person. The pandemic caused more than 500,000 deaths in the United States and more than 40 million deaths around the world. Subsequent pandemics in 1957-58 and 1968-69 caused far fewer fatalities in the U.S., 70,000 and 34,000 deaths respectively, but caused significant morbidity and mortality around the world. These two pandemics were caused by an influenza virus that arose from genetic re-assortment between human and avian viruses.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that in the U.S. alone, an influenza pandemic could infect up to 200 million people and cause between 200,000 and 1,900,000 deaths. The worldwide public health and scientific community is increasingly concerned about the potential for a pandemic to arise from the widespread and growing avian influenza A (H5N1) outbreak across several continents. Although many officials believe it is inevitable that future influenza pandemics will occur, it is impossible to predict the exact timing of these outbreaks.

**Table 1.** Estimated number of Episodes of Illness, Healthcare Utilization, and Deaths Associated with Moderate and Severe Pandemic Influenza Scenarios for the US Population and Chatham County <sup>1, 2</sup>

Characteristic	Moderate (1958/68–like)		Severe (1918 – like)	
	US	Chatham County	US	Chatham County
Illness	90 Million	81,000	90 Million	81,000
Outpatient Care	45 million	40,500	45 million	40,500
Hospitalization	865,000	779	9,900,000	8,910
ICU Care	128,750	116	1,485,000	1337
Mechanical Ventilation	64,875	58	742,500	668
Deaths	209,000	188	1,903,000	1713

<sup>1</sup> Estimates are based on extrapolation from past pandemics in the US, and do not include the potential impacts of interventions not available during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century pandemics.

<sup>2</sup> The calculations used to determine the figures in Table one are based on the following assumptions:

- Chatham County accounts for >0.03% of the total Georgia's population
- Susceptibility to the pandemic influenza subtype will be universal.
- The clinical disease attack rate will be 30% in the overall population. Illness rates will be highest among school-aged children (about 40%) and decline with age. Among working adults, an average of 20% will become ill during a community outbreak.
- Of those who become ill with influenza, 50% will seek outpatient medical care.

There are several characteristics of an influenza pandemic that differentiate it from other public health emergencies. First, it has the potential to suddenly cause illness in a very large number of people, who could easily overwhelm the health care system throughout the nation. A pandemic outbreak could also jeopardize essential community services by causing high levels of absenteeism in critical positions in every workforce. It is likely that vaccines against the new virus will not be available for six to eight months following the emergence of the virus. Basic services, such as health care, law enforcement, fire, emergency response, communications, transportation, and utilities, could be disrupted during a pandemic. Finally, the pandemic, unlike many other emergency events, could last for several weeks, if not months.

## Summary of Key Pandemic Preparedness and Response Principles Addressed in this Plan

### **Develop countywide disease surveillance programs, coordinated with state and federal efforts, to detect pandemic influenza strains in humans and animals.**

- i. Global surveillance networks identify circulating influenza strains, including novel strains that have the potential for causing a pandemic outbreak among domestic animals and persons in several countries.
- ii. A heightened local surveillance system, coupled with state, national and international surveillance efforts and laboratory testing, serves as an early warning system for potential pandemics and a critical component of pandemic response plans.
- iii. Local surveillance during a pandemic outbreak provides important information regarding the severity of disease, characteristics of the affected population, and impacts on the health care system.

### **Ensure mass vaccination plans and protocols are in place to rapidly administer vaccine and monitor vaccine effectiveness and safety.**

- i. When a pandemic virus first emerges vaccine will not be available for six months or more.
- ii. Demand for vaccine will significantly exceed supply during the pandemic, and may not be available at all for the first several months. Therefore, priority groups must be established by County Public Health based on national recommendations from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Public Health, to provide guidance regarding the use of vaccine in Chatham County(CCHD) when supplies become available. During a pandemic, however, CCHD will consider national guidelines and local epidemiological data to adjust and finalize priority groups as necessary.
- iii. As vaccine supplies increase, CCHD will, in collaboration with the Health Care Coalition, coordinate with regional partners to vaccinate the entire county population.

### **Establish guidelines for the utilization of antiviral medications by medical staff for treatment and prevention of influenza.**

- i. Antiviral medications can both prevent and treat influenza infection. Prophylaxis of individuals would need to continue throughout the period of exposure, possibly weeks to months. Treatment can decrease the severity of

illness and resulting complications of infection. For optimal impact, treatment needs to be started as soon as possible and within 48 hours of the onset of illness.

ii. The current supply of influenza antiviral medications is extremely limited and production cannot be rapidly expanded.

iii. Educating physicians, nurses, and other health care workers before and during the pandemic on the appropriate use of antiviral drugs will be important to maximize the effective use of antiviral medications.

iv. Local protocols for prioritizing the use of antiviral medicines will be developed by CCHD in consultation with the Georgia Department of Public Health, and will be based on federal guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

**Develop capabilities to implement non-medical measures to decrease the spread of disease throughout Chatham County as guided by the epidemiology of the pandemic.**

i. Emphasizing infection control measures in health care facilities, including hospitals, out-patient care settings and long-term care facilities, as well as workplaces, other community settings and the home can limit the spread of influenza among high-risk populations and health care workers.

ii. Voluntary isolation of ill persons either in a health care facility or at home is an infection control measure that will be implemented throughout all stages of a pandemic.

iii. Due to the fact that influenza is highly infectious and can be transmitted by people who appear to be well, quarantine of exposed individuals is likely to be a viable strategy for preventing the spread of the disease in the community only during the first stages of a pandemic.

iv. Social distancing measures such as limiting public gatherings and closing schools, colleges, universities, large child care centers, libraries, houses of worship, stadiums, and recreational facilities are intended to decrease opportunities for close contact among persons in the community, thereby decreasing the potential for influenza transmission among people and possibly slowing the spread of a pandemic. Decisions makers must consider the scope of their legal authorities, social and economic impacts, anticipated effectiveness and current epidemiology of the pandemic prior to implementing these measures.

v. During a pandemic, Public Health may recommend that people use public transportation only for essential travel, or use alternative means of transportation if available. There is no intention to restrict or close public

transportation systems, other than partial service reductions necessary due to a potential shortage of drivers or limitations on fuel supply.

**Assist local health care system partners, response agencies, elected leaders, the business community, and community based organizations with pandemic preparedness planning aimed at maintaining the provision of health care services, sustaining essential community services, and limiting the spread of disease throughout the duration of a pandemic.**

- i. An influenza pandemic will place a substantial burden on inpatient and outpatient health care services. Demands for medical supplies, equipment, and hospital beds may exceed available resources for several weeks.
- ii. Strategies to increase hospital bed availability during a pandemic include deferring elective procedures, implementing more stringent criteria for hospital admission, earlier discharge of patients with follow-up by home health care personnel, and establishing alternate care facilities in non-traditional sites.
- iii. As demands for health care resources and services increase sharply, illness and absenteeism among health care workers will further strain the ability to provide quality care.
- iv. Absenteeism during a pandemic among critical infrastructure agencies, first response agencies, businesses, and community based organizations must be accounted for in business continuity plans.

**Communicate with and educate the public, health care providers, local government and community leaders, and the media about the consequences of influenza pandemic and what each person can do to prepare.**

- i. Influencing public behavior toward basic infection control measures (hand washing, using alcohol hand gel, respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick, and avoiding unnecessary contact with other persons during a pandemic) will be a key factor in limiting the spread of influenza during a pandemic.
- ii. Communicating clear, concise and accurate information about influenza, the course of the pandemic, and response activities will increase awareness, limit public panic and speculation, and sustain confidence in the public health system.

## II. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Pandemic Influenza Response Plan for Chatham County provides guidance to CCHD and regional partners regarding detection, response and recovery from an influenza pandemic. The Plan describes the unique challenges posed by a pandemic that may necessitate specific leadership decisions, response actions, and communications mechanisms. Specifically, the purpose of the plan is to:

- Define preparedness activities that should be undertaken before a pandemic occurs that will enhance the effectiveness of response measures.
- Describe the response, coordination and decision making structure that will incorporate CCHD, the health care system in Chatham County, other local response agencies, and state and federal agencies during a pandemic.
- Define roles and responsibilities for CCHD, local health care partners and local response agencies during all phases of a pandemic.
- Describe public health interventions in a pandemic response and the timing of such interventions.
- Serve as a guide for local health care system partners, response agencies and businesses in the development of pandemic influenza response plans.
- Provide technical support and information on which preparedness and response actions are based.

During an influenza pandemic, CCHD and regional partners will utilize the plan to achieve the following goals:

- Limit the number of illnesses and deaths
- Preserve continuity of essential government functions
- Minimize social disruption
- Minimize economic losses

The plan will be coordinated with other CCHD preparedness plans and activities, and will be coordinated with the plans of community, state and federal partners.

### **III. SCOPE OF THE PLAN**

The Plan is an annex to Emergency Support Function 8 (Health and Medical Services) of the Local Disaster Plan. Emergency Support Function 8 and its annexes are referenced in the Plan as they provide a broad description of the responsibilities, authorities, and actions associated with public health emergencies.

The Plan primarily focuses on the roles, responsibilities, and activities of CCHD. However, specific responsibilities for key response partners are included to highlight points of coordination between agencies during a pandemic. It is expected that health care facilities and health care professionals, essential service providers, local government officials, and business leaders will develop and incorporate procedures and protocols addressing influenza preparedness and response activities into their emergency response plans.

This plan currently does not address measures that would be taken to contain an outbreak of the avian influenza virus in birds or other animal populations occurring in Chatham County. Federal and state departments of agriculture are primarily responsible for surveillance and control of influenza outbreaks in domestic animals, although agricultural control measures interface with public health actions to prevent transmission into humans. CCHD will develop an annex to this plan that will identify the roles and responsibilities of local, state and federal agencies in response to an avian influenza threat to Chatham County.

## IV. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

1. An influenza pandemic will result in the rapid spread of the infection with outbreaks throughout the world. Communities across the state and the country may be impacted simultaneously.
2. There will be a need for heightened global, national and local surveillance.
3. Birds with an avian influenza strain may arrive and cause avian outbreaks in Chatham County prior to the onset of a pandemic, significantly impacting domestic poultry, wild and exotic birds, and other species [*Note: Response protocols for avian influenza outbreaks are contained in Appendix G of this plan*].
4. Chatham County will not be able to rely on mutual aid resources, State or Federal assistance to support local response efforts.
5. Antiviral medications will be in extremely short supply. Local supplies of antiviral medications may be prioritized by CCHD for use in hospitalized influenza patients, health care workers providing care for patients, and other priority groups based on current national guidelines and in consultation with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH).
6. A vaccine for the pandemic influenza strain will likely not be available for 6 to 8 months following the emergence of a novel virus.
  - a. As vaccine becomes available, it will be distributed and administered by CCHD based on current national guidelines and in consultation with the Georgia DPH
  - b. Insufficient supplies of vaccines and antiviral medicines will place greater emphasis on social distancing strategies and public education to control the spread of the disease in the county.
7. The number of ill people requiring outpatient medical care and hospitalization could overwhelm the local health care system.
  - a. Hospitals and clinics will have to modify their operational structure to respond to high patient volumes and maintain functionality of critical systems.
  - b. The health care system may have to respond to increased demands for service while the medical workforce experiences 25-35% absenteeism due to illness.
  - c. Demand for inpatient beds and assisted ventilators will increase by 25% or more, and prioritization criteria for access to limited services and resources may be needed.

d. There will be tremendous demand for urgent medical care services.

e. Infection control measures specific to management of influenza patients will need to be developed and implemented at health care facilities, out-patient care settings and long-term care facilities.

f. The health care system may need to develop alternative care sites (designated "flu clinics") to relieve demand on hospital emergency rooms and care for persons not ill enough to merit hospitalization but who cannot be cared for at home.

g. Emergency Medical Service responders will face extremely high call volumes for several weeks, and may face 25% - 35% reduction in available staff.

h. The number of fatalities experienced during the first few weeks of a pandemic could overwhelm the resources of the Medical Examiner's Office, hospital morgues, and funeral homes.

i. The demand for home care and social services will increase dramatically.

8. There could be significant disruption of public and privately owned critical infrastructure including transportation, commerce, utilities, public safety, agriculture and communications.

9. Social distancing strategies aimed at reducing the spread of infection such as closing schools, community centers, and other public gather points and canceling public events may be implemented during a pandemic.

10. Some persons will be unable or unwilling to comply with isolation directives. For others, social distancing strategies may be less feasible (for example, homeless populations who live in congregate settings). It will be important to develop and disseminate strategies for infection control appropriate for these environments and populations.

11. It will be important to coordinate pandemic response strategies throughout counties in the Coastal Health District and the State due to the regional mobility of the population.

12. The general public, health care system, response agencies, and elected leaders will need continuous updates on the status of the pandemic outbreak, impacts on critical services, the steps CCHD is taking to address the incident, and steps response partners and the public can take to protect themselves.

## V. AUTHORITIES

Various state and local public officials have overlapping authorities with regard to protecting public health and safety. The Governor, the State Board of Health, the State Health Director, the County Executive, the local Board of Health, the executive heads of cities and towns, and the Local Health Officer each can implement authorities within the scope of their jurisdiction aimed at protecting public health, including increasing social distancing by closing public or private facilities. During a pandemic, the presence of overlapping authorities will necessitate close communication and coordination between elected leaders and the Local Health Officer to ensure decisions and response actions are clear and consistent.

### 1. Governor of the State

The Governor has authority to proclaim a state of emergency after finding that a disaster affects life, health, property, or the public peace. Official Code of Georgia Annotated OCGA 38-3-51 The Governor may assume direct operational control over all or part of local emergency management functions if the disaster is beyond local control. After proclaiming a state of emergency, the Governor has the authority to restrict public assembly, order periods of curfew, and prohibit activities that he or she believes should be prohibited in order to maintain life and health. The Governor may authorize the State Health Director to coordinate Command and Control(C & C) of all Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8 operations within the 18 Health Districts across the State. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) will be used to manage all emergency and non-emergency operations in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and District Operations Centers (DOC)

### 2. The State Health Director

The State Health Director shall enforce all laws for the protection of the public health, and all rules, regulations, and orders of the State Board of Health. OCGA 31-2-1, 31-12-2, 31-12-3, 31-12-and 31-3-12. The Director also shall investigate outbreaks and epidemics of disease and advise Local Health Officers about measures to prevent and control outbreaks. The Director shall enforce public health laws, rules, regulations, and orders in local matters when there is an emergency and the local board of health has failed to act with sufficient promptness or efficiency, or is unable to act for reasons beyond its control. The Director has the same authority as local health officers but will not exercise that authority unless: (a) the Local Health Officer fails or is unable to do so; (b) by agreement with

the Local Health Officer or local board of health; or (c) when in an emergency the safety of the public health demands it.

### 3. Chatham County Executive

The Chatham County Executive may proclaim a state of emergency within the County when, in the judgment of the Executive, extraordinary measures are necessary to protect public peace, safety and welfare. Under a state of emergency, the Executive may impose curfews, close any or all private businesses, close any or all public buildings and places including streets, alleys, schools, parks, beaches and amusement areas, and proclaim any such orders as are imminently necessary for the protection of life and property.

### 4. County Board of Health

The jurisdiction of local Board of Health is coextensive with the boundaries of the county. OCGA 31-2-1, 31-12-2, 31-12-3, 31-12-and 31-3-12. The local Board of Health shall supervise all matters pertaining to the preservation of the life and health of the people within its jurisdiction. The Board shall enforce through the Local Health Officer the public health statutes of the state and the rules promulgated by the State Board of Health and the State Health Director. The Board may also enact such local rules and regulations as are necessary to preserve and promote the public health and to provide the enforcement of those rules and regulations.

### 5. Mayors

The Mayors may proclaim a state of civil emergency within the City when, in the judgment of the Mayor, extraordinary measures are necessary to protect public peace, safety and welfare. Under a state of civil emergency, the Mayor may impose curfews, close any or all business establishments, close any or all public buildings and places including streets, alleys, schools, parks, beaches and amusement areas, direct the use of all public and private health, medical and convalescent facilities and equipment to provide emergency health and medical care for injured persons, and proclaim any such orders as are imminently necessary for the protection of life and property.

## 6. Local Health Officer

The Local Health Officer acts under the direction of the local Board of Health. OCGA 31-2-1, 31-12-2, 31-12-3, 31-12-and 31-3-12. The Local Health Officer enforces the public health statutes, rules and regulations of the state and the local Board of Health. The Local Health Officer has the authority to control and prevent the spread of any dangerous, contagious or infectious diseases that may occur within his or her jurisdiction.

The Local Health Officer shall, when necessary, conduct investigations and institute disease control measures, including medical examination, testing, counseling, treatment, vaccination, decontamination of persons or animals, isolation, quarantine, and inspection and closure of facilities. The Local Health Officer may initiate involuntary detention for isolation and quarantine of individuals or groups pursuant to provisions of state regulations.

The Local Health Officer has the authority to carry out steps needed to verify a diagnosis reported by a health care provider, and to require any person suspected of having a reportable disease or condition to submit to examinations to determine the presence of the disease. The Local Health Officer may also investigate any suspected case of a reportable disease or other condition if necessary, and require notification of additional conditions of public health importance occurring within the jurisdiction.

The Local Health Officer shall establish, in consultation with local health care providers, health facilities, emergency management personnel, law enforcement agencies, and other entities deemed necessary, plans, policies, and procedures for instituting emergency measures to prevent the spread of communicable disease.

The Local Health Officer may take all necessary actions to protect the public health in the event of a contagious disease occurring in a school or day care center. Those actions may include, but are not limited to, closing the affected school, closing other schools, ordering cessation of certain activities, and excluding persons who are infected with the disease. Prior to taking action, the Local Health Officer shall consult with the State Health Director the superintendent of the school district or the chief administrator of the day care center, and provide them and their board of directors a written decision directing them to take action.

The Local Health Officer's powers are not contingent on a proclamation of emergency by the county Executive or an executive head of a city or town.

## VI. PHASES OF A PANDEMIC

The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a global influenza preparedness plan that includes a classification system for guiding planning and response activities for an influenza pandemic. This classification system is comprised of six phases of increasing public health risk associated with the emergence and spread of a new influenza virus subtype that may lead to a pandemic. The Director General of WHO formally declares the current global pandemic phase and adjusts the phase level to correspond with pandemic conditions around the world. For each phase, the global influenza preparedness plan identifies response measures WHO will take, and recommends actions that countries around the world should implement.

Pandemic Phases	Public Health Goals
<p><b>Inter-pandemic Period</b></p> <p><i>Phase 1</i> – No new influenza virus subtypes detected in humans. An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection or disease is considered low.</p> <p><i>Phase 2</i> – No new influenza virus subtypes detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses substantial risk of human disease.</p>	<p>Strengthen influenza pandemic preparedness at all levels. Closely monitor human and animal surveillance data.</p> <p>Minimize the risk of transmission of animal influenza virus to humans; detect and report such transmission rapidly if it occurs.</p>
<p><b>Pandemic Alert Period</b></p> <p><i>Phase 3</i> – Human infection(s) are occurring with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact.</p> <p><i>Phase 4</i> – Small cluster(s) of human infection with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.</p> <p><i>Phase 5</i> – Larger cluster(s) of human infection but human-to-human spread is localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk).</p>	<p>Ensure rapid characterization of the new virus subtype and early detection, notification and response to additional cases.</p> <p>Contain the new virus within limited foci or delay spread to gain time to implement preparedness measures, including vaccine development.</p> <p>Maximize efforts to contain or delay spread to possibly avert a pandemic, and to gain time to implement response measures.</p>
<p><b>Pandemic Period</b></p> <p><i>Phase 6</i> – Pandemic is declared. Increased and sustained transmission in the general population.</p>	<p>Implement response measures including social distancing to minimize pandemic impacts</p>

In accordance with the Department of Health and Human Services Pandemic Influenza Strategic Plan, HHS will determine and communicate the pandemic phase level for the U.S. based on the global pandemic phase and the extent of disease spread throughout the country.

The Chatham County Pandemic Influenza Response Plan corresponds to the WHO pandemic phases. Each phase within the Plan is subdivided into two components, "affected" and "not affected" depending upon whether human infection is occurring within the local region. Appropriate preparedness and response measures are identified for each phase, with implementation based in part on whether the County is affected.

Pandemic Phases	Sub Phase
<b>Phase 1</b>	No sub phases.
<b>Phase 2</b>	A. Local area is affected or has extensive travel / trade links with affected areas
	B. Not affected
<b>Phase 3</b>	A. Local area is affected or has extensive travel / trade links with affected areas
	B. Not affected
<b>Phase 4</b>	A. Local area is affected or has extensive travel / trade links with affected areas
	B. Not affected
<b>Phase 5</b>	A. Local area is affected or has extensive travel / trade links with affected areas
	B. Not affected
<b>Phase 6</b>	A. Not yet affected
	B. Local area is affected or has extensive travel / trade links with affected areas
	C. Subsided
	D. Next wave

## **VII. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Chatham County Health Department (CCHD)**

1. Facilitate countywide pandemic planning and preparedness efforts.
2. Coordinate the community's emergency public health response through Emergency Support Function 8 (Health and Medical Services), and the Local Disaster Plan.
3. Educate the public, health care system partners, response partners, businesses, community based organizations and elected leaders about influenza pandemics, expected impacts and consequences, and preventive measures.
4. Conduct county-wide surveillance to track the spread of the human disease and its impact on the community. Through liaison with agriculture and wildlife agencies, facilitate influenza surveillance in animals in Chatham County and monitor surveillance data.
5. Identify and declare diseases of public health significance, and communicate such declarations to health system partners.
6. Coordinate planning for and implementation of disease containment strategies and authorities.
7. Provide ongoing technical support to the health care system including current surveillance guidelines, recommendations for clinical case management, infection control measures and laboratory testing.
8. Support the health care system's planning and response efforts for medical surge capacity including mass casualty and mass fatality incidents.
9. Support the development and management of local antiviral medication stockpiles.
10. Develop and implement protocols for the use of limited supplies of influenza vaccine and antiviral medicines consistent with national guidelines and in consultation with the Georgia DPH.
11. Direct distribution and administration of vaccine, including mass vaccination efforts.
12. Provide effective communications to the public, the media, elected officials, health care providers, business and community leaders throughout public health emergencies.

## **Local Hospitals, Clinics, Providers and other Health System Partners**

1. Health care system partner agencies, participating as the local ESF 8 planning group and facilitated by CCHD, will work together to maximize the health care system's ability to provide medical care during a pandemic. Specific steps include:
  - a. Identify and prioritize response issues affecting the county-wide health system during a pandemic.
  - b. Develop mechanisms to efficiently share information and resources between health system partners, and to communicate with CCHD and relevant emergency operations centers, as appropriate.
  - c. Coordinate with the Local Health Officer regarding policy level decisions regarding the operations of the local health system.
  - d. Assure that health care professionals receive relevant communications from CCHD in a timely manner.
2. Hospitals and other health care facilities should develop pandemic response plans consistent with the health care planning guidance contained in the Health and Human Services Pandemic Influenza Plan. Health care facility pandemic response plans will address medical surge capacity to sustain health care delivery capabilities when routine systems are overwhelmed
3. Health care facilities and health care providers will participate in local influenza surveillance activities.
4. Hospitals will develop infection control plans to triage and isolate infectious patients and protect staff from disease transmission.

## **State Department of Public Health (DPH)**

1. Coordinate statewide pandemic planning and preparedness efforts
2. Coordinate statewide surveillance activities.
3. Operate a CDC Laboratory Response Network public health reference laboratory for novel influenza virus testing.
4. Coordinate submission of pandemic epidemiological data to CDC and dissemination of statewide data and situation updates to local health jurisdictions.

5. Coordinate development and implementation of disease containment strategies across multiple counties and regions within the state.
6. Request federal assistance to support the local health and medical response, including antiviral medicines and vaccines from the Strategic National Stockpile, when local and state resources are exceeded.
7. Educate and inform the public on the course of the pandemic and preventive measures.

## **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**

1. Provide overall guidance on pandemic influenza planning within the United States.
2. Coordinate the national response to an influenza pandemic.
3. Provide guidance and tools to promote pandemic preparedness planning and coordination for States and local jurisdictions.
4. Provide guidance to state and local health departments regarding prioritization of limited supplies of antiviral medications and vaccines.
5. Determine and communicate the pandemic phase for the U.S. based on the global pandemic phase (established by WHO) and the extent of disease spread throughout the country.

## **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

1. Conduct national and international disease surveillance.
2. Serve as a liaison to the WHO.
3. Develop reference strains for vaccines and conduct research to understand transmission and pathogenicity of viruses with pandemic potential.
4. Develop, evaluate, and modify disease control and prevention strategies.
5. Support vaccination programs; monitor vaccine safety.
6. Investigate pandemic outbreaks; define the epidemiology of the disease.
7. Monitor the nation-wide impact of a pandemic
8. Coordinate the stockpiling of antiviral drugs and other essential materials within the Strategic National Stockpile.
9. Coordinate the implementation of international – U.S. travel restrictions.

## **World Health Organization**

1. Monitor global pandemic conditions and provide information updates.
2. Facilitate enhanced global pandemic preparedness, surveillance, vaccine development, and health response.
3. Declare global pandemic phase and adjust phases based on current outbreak conditions.

## **Specific Responsibilities of CCHD Divisions and Sections**

### *Local Health Director(LHD)*

- Communicate and coordinate directly with the Chatham County EMA, executive heads of cities and towns, Local Board of Health, and local ESF 8 partner agencies regarding pandemic preparedness and response activities
- Coordinate directly with the local ESF 8 partners and make decisions regarding strategies, thresholds and methods for reallocating resources and temporary restructuring of health system operations in response to a pandemic.
- Authorize and communicate public health directives regarding social distancing strategies and other protective actions to elected leaders, the business community, schools, the local ESF 8 partners and other partners.
- Assign responsibilities to CCHD staff for planning and responding to the pandemic.
- Ensure business continuity of critical CCHD functions during all phases of the pandemic.
- Direct isolation and quarantine of individuals and groups, as needed, based on recommendations from the Epidemiology Section.

### *Public Information Officer (PIO)*

- Provide accurate, timely information to the public regarding preparations for a pandemic, the impacts of the outbreak, local response actions and disease control recommendations
- Educate the public on how they can protect themselves from becoming infected and infecting others.
- Activate and direct the management of public information call centers focused on providing health information to the public.

### *Epidemiology and Immunization Section*

- Carry out countywide surveillance, epidemiological investigation and disease control activities.
- Provide information and technical support on surveillance, epidemiology and clinical issues, including case identification, laboratory testing, management, and infection control to health care providers and facilities.

- Make decisions regarding the need for individual and group isolation and quarantine.
- Work with the CCHD PIO to develop and disseminate risk communications messages to the public.
- Provide recommendations to the Local Health Officer regarding measures to sustain the functionality of the local health care system.
- Advise the Local Health Officer regarding the need for and potential consequences of social distancing measures.
- Coordinate receipt of vaccines in conjunction with the Pharmacy, and develop strategies for storage, distribution and allocation of vaccines among health care system partners.
- Develop protocols for prioritizing limited supplies of antiviral medicines and vaccines in Chatham County.

#### *Nursing Services Division*

- Participate in planning activities focused to develop capacity for community-based influenza evaluation and treatment clinics.
- Lead and coordinate all mass vaccination response activities.
- Lead efforts with community partners to manage a client care call center (Isolation and Quarantine Response Center).
- Develop infection control plans for CCHD sites, with technical assistance from the EPI Section, to protect staff and clients.
- Coordinate countywide pandemic planning, education and outreach efforts with homeless service agencies.
- Provide technical assistance to licensed child care centers regarding preparedness for pandemic influenza.

#### *Emergency Preparedness Section*

- Lead pandemic planning and preparedness efforts for CCHD in conjunction with local, state and federal response partners.

- Conduct training, drills and evaluated exercises to enhance CCHD readiness to respond to a pandemic.
- Coordinate planning and response activities with hospitals and community health clinics in collaboration with other local ESF 8 partners, EPI Section and Nursing Division.
- Coordinate activation and management of the CCHD Emergency Operations Center.
- Advise the Local Health Officer regarding the potential social and economic impacts of social distancing measures, and the extent to which implementation of such measures is feasible
- Coordinate department-wide business continuity efforts specific to the potential impacts of a pandemic.

*All CCHD Divisions*

- Coordinate countywide pandemic planning, education and outreach efforts with:
  - School systems
  - Business community
  - Community/Faith based organizations
- Coordinate with economic development agencies and chambers of commerce regarding the economic consequences of a pandemic

*Medical Examiner's Office*

- Lead mass fatality planning and response efforts.
- Coordinate with and support hospitals regarding mass fatalities planning and response.
- Incorporate funeral home directors into planning efforts for pandemic response.
- In conjunction with community partners, ordinate planning and development of victim assistance centers.
- ers, Incorporate  
In conjunction with community partners, co

*Emergency Medical Service*

- Facilitate pandemic planning and response activities with countywide EMS providers 911 dispatch centers.

- Develop protocols for maintaining critical EMS response capability during a pandemic generating high call volumes and reducing available EMS resources.

#### *Environmental Health Services Division*

- Assist in surveillance for animal influenza viruses through liaison with the State Departments of Agriculture and Fish & Wildlife
- Work with the CCHD PIO to develop and disseminate risk communications messages to the public concerning zoonotic influenza virus transmission, food safety, and animal waste disposal issues.

#### *All Divisions and Sections*

- Identify mission critical functions that must be maintained during all hazards including a pandemic.
- Identify staff who can be cross trained to perform emergency response
- Identify functions that could be temporarily discontinued or performed • response, as directed by the CCHD Incident Commander.
- Be prepared to mobilize all necessary staff to support the CCHD pandemic influenza via telecommuting for several weeks.

## VIII. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

### A. Overview

1. CCHD will be the lead agency in coordinating the local health and medical response to a pandemic with State, Federal, and local agencies and officials. CCHD will work through the local ESF 8 Partner group to monitor and, if necessary, direct the use of health care system resources and restructuring of health care system operations.
2. CCHD will authorize the acquisition of state or federal medical resources in support of health care system partners
3. CCHD will coordinate response actions with the Georgia DPH and neighboring local health jurisdictions.
4. CCHD will respond under the auspices of this plan as well as the Department Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Support Function 8 (Health and Medical Services) and the Regional Disaster Plan.
5. CCHD response actions will emphasize disease surveillance and investigation, social distancing measures to reduce the spread of infection, and providing frequent communication and education to the public about the pandemic, the public health response, and steps the public can take to reduce the risks of infection
6. Throughout a pandemic, the CCHD Emergency Preparedness Director, County EPI Section Manager, and County Nurse Manager will advise the Local Health Officer regarding public health response activities, social distancing measures and management of CCHD resources.
7. CCHD will coordinate health care through the ESF 8 partner group in Chatham County with representatives from hospitals, out-patient medical groups, private physicians, emergency medical providers, mental health providers, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, and pharmacists. The Group will develop strategies for:
  - a. Coordinating the health care system response during a pandemic and other public health emergencies;
  - b. Assuring the most effective use of available health care system resources during health emergencies; and
  - c. Advising the Local Health Officer regarding the impacts of the pandemic on the health care system, on the need for changes in

health care system operations to respond to the pandemic, and on strategies to implement necessary changes.

## B. Direction and Control

1. The public health response will be managed per the guidance and protocols included in this Plan and ESF 8 of the local Disaster Plan.
2. CCHD and all response partners will operate under the Incident Command System throughout the duration of the pandemic response.
3. CCHD will activate the Public Health Emergency Operations Center to coordinate the county-wide public health and medical response during a pandemic.
4. Chatham County, Savannah, and other cities may activate their EOCs during a pandemic to coordinate consequence response.
5. During Pandemic Phases 1, 2 and 3 where Chatham County is not directly affected, CCHD leads health system preparedness efforts and countywide education efforts for pandemic response.
6. During Pandemic Phases 4, 5 and 6 CCHD will communicate with health system partners through the local ESF 8 group to coordinate management of health care system resources and information.
7. CCHD will assess the viability of social distancing measures and establish criteria for their implementation.
8. Upon reaching Pandemic Phase 4 (global) CCHD will:
  - a. assess whether to activate the Pandemic Influenza Response Plan and ESF 8 to coordinate the health care system response.
  - b. provide regular briefings to the Chatham County EMA, the Mayors, other local elected officials, and regional response partners. Briefings will address the nature of the disease, its communicability and virulence, availability of vaccines and antivirals, actions that are being taken to minimize the impact, actions that response partners should implement to protect critical functions, and health information being shared with the public and health care providers.

## C. Communications

1. CCHD serves as the lead agency in Chatham County for risk communications messaging and public education regarding pandemic influenza. All Chatham

County jurisdictions will coordinate with CCHD to ensure consistency of communications and education messaging regarding pandemic influenza.

2. Communications with the public and health care providers will be a critical component of the pandemic response, including managing the utilization of health care services. This plan's communications goals are to:
  - a. Provide accurate, consistent, and comprehensive information about pandemic influenza including case definitions, treatment options, infection control measures, and reporting requirements.
  - b. Instill and maintain public confidence in the County's public health and health care systems and their ability to respond to and manage an influenza pandemic.
  - c. Ensure an efficient mechanism for managing information between CCHD, health system partners and response agencies.
  - d. Contribute to maintaining order, minimizing public panic and fear, and facilitating public compliance by providing accurate, rapid, and complete information.
  - e. Address rumors, inaccuracies, and misperceptions as quickly as possible, and prevent the stigmatization of affected groups.

3. Communications During Pandemic Phases 1, 2, 3

- a. The CCHD Communications Section:
  - i. Assesses the information needs of health care providers.
  - ii. Assesses the information needs of the general public.
  - iii. Identifies any logistical constraints to effective communications, such as communications staffing and equipment needs, and public information call center staffing and capacity.
  - iv. Intensifies public education efforts about influenza pandemics, animal influenza and steps that can be taken to reduce exposure to infection. Information may be disseminated via web site postings, newspaper editorials, flyers and billboards, television and radio broadcasts.
  - v. Coordinates with CDC, the Georgia DPH, and health departments in adjacent jurisdictions to develop common health messages and education materials.

b. The Epidemiology Section, Emergency Preparedness and County Nurse Manager Sections educates providers, public officials, businesses and emergency responders about influenza pandemics and steps they should take to plan for pandemic outbreaks.

c. The CCHD Medical Director will convene appropriate internal sections and Divisions to develop a communications strategy for vulnerable populations including identifying appropriate community partners for reaching and educating diverse communities such as limited English speaking and homeless citizens.

#### 4. Communications During Phases 4, 5, 6

a. CCHD Public Information Officer (PIO) will evaluate the need to establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) in conjunction with appropriate health system and response partners. A JIC will be activated when the CCHD PIO deems it necessary based on specific characteristics of the pandemic.

b. The CCHD PIO will evaluate the need to establish a public information call center to respond to public inquiries.

c. The CCHD PIO will work with the local ESF 8 group and the Epidemiology Section to develop public information messages related to the utilization of the health care system and other resources (triage centers, call centers, etc).

d. The Epidemiology Section will initiate regular communication briefings with hospital emergency rooms, infection control practitioners, infectious disease specialists, and community providers as necessary and in collaboration with the local ESF 8 group. The Section will also regularly communicate with the Local and District Operations Centers.

e. The Emergency Preparedness Director, along with EPI and Nursing Sections' will conduct regular briefings with key response partners, utilizing the emergency zone structure, to inform EOC staff, business leaders, community based organizations, first response agencies and critical infrastructure agencies on the status of the pandemic and local response actions.

f. As the pandemic expands, the CCHD PIO will provide daily updates on the pandemic and will organize regular media briefings.

g. The CCHD PIO will keep the public informed about steps that should be taken to protect against infection, treatment options for individuals who are infected, the status of the spread of the outbreak in the

community, and the disease control and containment strategies that are being implemented.

#### D. Mitigation

Mitigation activities are taken in advance of an influenza pandemic to prevent or temper its impact. Mitigation efforts should occur primarily during pandemic phases 1-3.

CCHD's pre-event mitigation activities include:

1. Planning, exercising, evaluating and revising the Pandemic Influenza Response Plan.
2. Training and equipping CCHD staff to assure competencies and capacities needed to respond to a pandemic outbreak.
3. Developing strategic partnerships and facilitating capacity building with local hospitals, non-hospital-based health care providers and agencies, other health care system stakeholders, and local, state and federal response agencies and their staff.
4. Educating response partners, the media and public about the consequences of influenza pandemics and recommended preparedness measures.
5. Informing and updating local elected officials about the potential impacts of an influenza pandemic on essential services and infrastructure in Chatham County.
6. Stockpiling necessary medications and equipment that will be needed to respond to an influenza pandemic.

#### E. Surveillance

1. Influenza is not a mandated notifiable disease under Georgia administrative code. During a pandemic response, the Epidemiology Section may declare the circulating strain of influenza causing the pandemic Disease of Public Health Significance, requiring health care providers and / or laboratories to report cases.
2. As a pandemic outbreak progresses, the Epidemiology Section will enhance existing surveillance efforts, including gathering relevant available clinical data (i.e. admission and discharge diagnosis) from hospitals in the county and from selected large medical group practices, such as SouthCoast Group and other community health care providers.

### 3. Surveillance During Pandemic Phases 1, 2, 3

- a. The Epidemiology Section conducts daily influenza tracking activities [reports regarding school absenteeism, pneumonia and influenza deaths submitted by Vital Statistics, nursing home reports, homeless shelter reports and sentinel providers].
- b. The Epidemiology Section and a Public Health Veterinarian coordinate surveillance activities with the disease control activities of the CDC, state agencies, and health departments in adjacent jurisdictions.
- c. Syndromic surveillance data is collected and assessed [chief complaint and hospital admission and discharge data, when available, from County hospitals, Emergency Medical Service dispatch data, and daily death reports from the Medical Examiner's Office].
- d. CCHD works with clinicians, hospitals, and infectious disease specialists to enhance case detection, according to CDC screening criteria, among persons who have recently traveled to outbreak areas and present with illnesses meeting the clinical criteria for influenza.
- e. CCHD develops partnerships with key employers to track absenteeism in the event of a flu pandemic [City and county government, large employers].
- f. CCHD Laboratory supports the Georgia DPH Laboratory in conducting influenza testing, as requested. The CCHD Laboratory will not perform viral culture.

### 4. Surveillance During Pandemic Phases 4, 5, 6

- a. CCHD may require health care providers and institutions to report influenza and to send specimens from these cases to the State DPH Laboratory or the CCHD Laboratory for testing, as requested.
- b. CCHD will inform community health care providers regarding recommendations for influenza laboratory testing based on consultation with Georgia DPH and CDC.
- c. The Epidemiology Section will comply with CDC and Georgia DPH guidelines to facilitate monitoring of the influenza pandemic strain for antiviral resistance.
- d. The Epidemiology Section will activate tracking of absenteeism with schools and certain sentinel employers, where feasible.

## F. Public Education

1. Public education through all phases of a pandemic may involve any or all of the following elements:

- a. Dissemination of printed and web-based information in multiple languages.
- b. Active outreach to traditionally underserved populations, in cooperation with community organizations.
- c. Frequent use of radio, television and print media.
- d. Coordination with other health care providers and care-givers to ensure consistent messaging.
- e. Implementation of a public information call center.

2. Government agencies, businesses, schools, health care system partners, community based organizations and other agencies within Chatham County will promote and disseminate pandemic influenza educational messages to their staff.

3. CCHD leads efforts to strengthen support, outreach and training for vulnerable populations in Chatham County. Specific actions include:

- a. Conduct needs assessments identifying types of resources and information vulnerable populations need during emergencies.
- b. Provide training and job aids for cultural leaders and medical interpreters to serve as information conduits to vulnerable populations during emergencies.
- c. Partner with cultural leaders and medical interpreters across the county to build sustainable preparedness capabilities within communities.

## G. Vaccine and Antiviral Medications

1. Vaccine serves as the most effective preventive strategy against outbreaks of influenza, including pandemics. However, dissemination of an effective influenza vaccine during a pandemic faces several challenges:

- a. A pandemic strain could be detected at any time, and production of vaccine could take six to eight months after the virus first emerges.
- b. The target population for vaccination will ultimately include the entire U.S. population.

c. It is expected that demand for vaccine will initially outstrip supply and administration of limited vaccine will need to be prioritized based on national guidelines and in consultation with the Georgia DPH.

d. It is likely that two doses of vaccine occurring two to four weeks apart will be required.

2. Antiviral medications may be useful for controlling and preventing influenza prior to the availability of vaccines. However, there is a limited supply of antiviral drugs effective against pandemic strains.

3. Vaccine Management During Phases 1, 2, 3

a. The Nursing and Epidemiology Sections, in consultation with Georgia DPH and based on national guidelines, is developing and refining recommendations for use of available vaccine based on local priority groups, and include as Appendix A to this plan.

b. The Mass Vaccination Group within CCHD is developing plans for administration of vaccine to priority groups, and eventually the entire county population, including activation of mass vaccination clinics.

c. The Nursing and Epidemiology Sections is coordinating with Georgia DPH to determine how adverse reactions to the vaccine will be tracked and reported.

d. The Emergency Preparedness Section, Epidemiology Section and Nursing Section are collaborating with key stakeholders to identify essential personnel to be included in priority groups for vaccinations.

e. The Mass Vaccination Group is coordinating vaccination planning with private sector health care providers.

5. Vaccine Management During Phases 4, 5, 6

a. In consultation with Georgia DPH, the Nursing and Epidemiology Sections will provide updated recommendations to the Local Health Officer regarding priority groups to receive vaccination based on CDC guidelines.

b. The Mass Vaccination Group will finalize mass vaccination plans with regional partners.

c. The Coastal Health District Pharmacy, in collaboration with the Nursing and Epidemiology Sections, will prepare to receive, store and transport vaccine as needed.

d. CCHD will distribute and administer vaccine as soon as possible after receipt according to local priorities and CDC guidelines, including activation of mass vaccination plans as appropriate.

5. Antiviral Medication Management During Phases 1, 2, 3

a. The Epidemiology Section is identifying priority groups and estimate the number of people in each priority group, based on CDC guidelines, to receive limited supplies of antiviral medications during a pandemic and include as Appendix B to this plan.

b. The Local Health Officer is coordinating with appropriate health care system partners and elected leaders to form strategies for acquiring antiviral medications.

c. The Emergency Preparedness Section is developing an antiviral medication distribution plan in conjunction with the Epidemiology Section, the Mass Vaccination Group, and appropriate members of the local ESF 8 group.

d. The Epidemiology Section is developing and will distribute guidelines for medical providers regarding the use of antiviral medications.

6. Antiviral Medication Management During Phases 4, 5,

a. CCHD will ensure that staff and resources are in place to distribute antiviral medications, as supplies allow.

b. CCHD will activate its plans for requesting medications from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).

c. CCHD will fully activate antiviral medication distribution plans.

H. Isolation and Quarantine

1. During all phases of a pandemic, persons ill with influenza will be directed to remain in isolation in health care settings or at home, to the extent possible.

2. Hospitals will implement isolation protocols for all patients suspected of being infected with pandemic influenza.

3. Once person-to-person transmission is established locally, quarantine of individuals exposed to influenza cases will be of limited value in preventing further spread of the disease.

4. Quarantine of contacts of influenza cases may be beneficial during the earliest phases of a pandemic, and in response to an influenza virus that has not achieved the ability to spread easily from person-to-person.

5. CCHD will work collaboratively with the CDC Division of Quarantine Station at the Hilton Head-Savannah International Airport and the Port of Savannah on management of passengers/ships crews requiring isolation, quarantine or follow-up.

6. Isolation and Quarantine During Phases 1, 2, 3

a. The Emergency Preparedness Section is coordinating planning efforts for isolation and quarantine with Georgia DPH, neighboring local health jurisdictions, community based organizations and local law enforcement.

b. CCHD is following CDC guidelines in developing and implementing isolation and quarantine procedures for individuals traveling from areas in which a novel influenza virus is present.

7. Isolation and Quarantine During Phases 4, 5, 6

a. The Epidemiology Section will coordinate with health care providers and hospitals to ensure that influenza patients are isolated in appropriate facilities based on their medical condition (homes, hospital, alternate care facility).

b. The Epidemiology Section will develop protocols for quarantine of close contacts of persons infected with a potential pandemic strain.

c. The Epidemiology Section will provide technical assistance to health care providers and hospitals regarding options for management of health care workers who come in contact with influenza patients or who develop influenza.

d. The CCHD Isolation and Quarantine Response Plan will be activated as needed to ensure availability of isolation and quarantine facilities and support systems for patients

#### I. Social Distancing Strategies

1. Social distancing strategies are non-medical measures intended to reduce the spread of disease from person-to-person by discouraging or preventing people from coming in close contact with each other. These strategies could include closing public and private schools, colleges and universities; closing non-essential government functions; implementing emergency staffing plans for the public and private sector including increasing telecommuting, flex scheduling and other options; and closing

public gathering places including stadiums, theaters, churches, community centers and other facilities.

a. The effectiveness of social distancing strategies is not known with certainty, nor is the degree of public compliance with measures that is necessary for success.

b. Implementation of social distancing strategies in Chatham County may create social disruption and significant, long-term economic impacts. It is unknown how the public will respond to these measures.

c. It is assumed that social distancing strategies must be applied on a county-wide or state-wide basis in order to maximize effectiveness.

2. The Local Health Officer will consult with the Epidemiology Section Chief, the County Emergency Preparedness Director and the State Department of Agriculture throughout all phases of a pandemic regarding the epidemiology and impact of the pandemic in and around Chatham County.

3. The Local Health Officer will review social distancing strategies and current epidemiological data during each phase and coordinate with the County EMA, the Mayors, and executive heads of other cities and towns regarding social distancing actions that should be implemented to limit the spread of the disease.

4. Decisions regarding the implementation of social distancing measures including suspending large public gatherings and closing stadiums, theaters, churches, community centers, and other facilities where large numbers of people gather will be made jointly and concurrently by the Local Health Officer and the County EMA and coordinated with all executive heads of cities and towns in Chatham County.

5. Decisions regarding the closing of all public and private schools, community colleges and universities in Chatham County will be made by the Local Health Officer after consultation with local school superintendents, school presidents and elected officials.

6. Social Distancing Strategies During Phases 1, 2, 3

a. The Emergency Preparedness Section and is coordinating with the CCHD PIO, Epidemiology Section, and Nursing Section to educate elected officials, government leaders, school officials, response partners, homeless services agencies, businesses, the media and the public regarding the consequences of pandemics, the use of social distancing strategies, the associated impacts they cause and the process for implementing these measures.

b. Shelters for the homeless are coordinating with the Epidemiology Section and the CCHD Medical Director to provide guidance and instructions regarding infection control strategies to homeless service agencies that operate congregate care facilities.

c. The Local Health Officer will confirm the decision making process and criteria for recommending social distancing strategies with the County EMA, the Mayors and all other executive heads of cities and towns.

#### 7. Social Distancing Strategies During Phases 4, 5, 6

a. The Local Health Officer will coordinate with elected officials regarding decision making and implementation of social distancing strategies that are commensurate with the severity of illness and societal impact of the pandemic

b. Specific, county-wide strategies that may be identified by the Local Health Officer include:

i. Encourage government agencies and the private sector to implement emergency staffing plans to maintain critical business functions while maximizing the use of telecommuting, flex schedules, and alternate work site options.

ii. Recommend that the public use public transit only for essential travel.

iii. Advise County residents to defer non-essential travel to other areas of the country and the world affected by pandemic influenza outbreaks.

iv. Suspend public events where large numbers of people congregate including sporting events, concerts, and parades.

v. Close libraries, large child care centers, churches, theaters, community centers, and other places where large groups gather.

vi. Close public and private schools, colleges and universities.

vii. Suspend government functions not involved in pandemic response maintaining critical continuity functions.

c. The Local Health Officer will monitor the effectiveness of social distancing strategies in controlling the spread of disease and will advise appropriate decision-makers when social distancing strategies should be relaxed or ended.

## **IX. Health and Medical Response**

### **A. Health Care System Response**

1. A severe influenza pandemic is expected to significantly increase the demand for health care services at a time when the availability of health care workers will be reduced due to illness. In a severe pandemic, the imbalance between supply and demand is likely to overwhelm current health care system capacity and necessitate implementation of alternate strategies to manage the demand on health system resources.
2. During a pandemic impacting the County, all efforts will be employed to sustain the functionality of the health care system while maintaining an acceptable level of medical care. In order to accomplish this, health care delivery system partners may need to:
  - a. limit the provision of health care services to patients with urgent, health problems requiring hospitalization
  - b. take steps to increase hospital bed capacity to care for large numbers of influenza patients;
  - c. mobilize, reassign and deploy staff within and between health care facilities to address critical shortfalls;
  - d. implement pandemic-specific patient triage and management procedures;
  - e. provide alternative mechanisms for patients to address non-urgent health care needs such as telephone and internet-based consultation
3. During a pandemic, alternate care facilities may be identified and activated to provide additional health care system medical surge capacity.
  - a. These facilities would add to the existing bed capacity in the county and provide supportive care to influenza patients, or could serve as triage facilities (flu clinics) to relieve the burden on hospital emergency departments.
  - b. Locating, staffing and supplying these sites will be accomplished through a coordinated effort between CCHD, the Health Care Coalition, and local emergency managers.
  - c. CCHD surge equipment i.e., WestCot beds, 50-bed hospital, EMS Trauma Trailer, N-95 and Ventilator Stockpiles may be identified and pre-staged.

4. Emergency Medical and Health Care System Response During Phases 1, 2, 3

- a. CCHD is educating health care providers about influenza pandemics and involve them in community pandemic response planning through the ESF 8 Group.
- b. CCHD is incorporating existing groups, such as the Region J Regional Coordinating Hospital Emergency Preparedness Committee and South Carolina's DHEC Region 8 into its pandemic planning efforts through the ESF 8 Group
- c. Hospitals and health care organizations are developing pandemic influenza response plans addressing at a minimum medical surge capacity, triage, infection control, communications and staffing issues.
- d. CCHD provides technical assistance to health system partners regarding development of a Medical Reserve Corps and other strategies to expand staffing resource.
- e. Preparedness Section is facilitating development of protocols for reprioritizing CCHD functions during a pandemic and mobilizing staff to support maintenance of critical public health and medical needs.
- f. CCHD will provide regular briefings to ESF 8 Group members regarding the status of a novel virus and its potential for causing a pandemic.
- g. CCHD is coordinating with the Region J Hospital Emergency Preparedness Committee to ensure systems are in place to track the following items during a pandemic outbreak:
  - i. Number of available Intensive Care Unit and medical beds (adults and pediatrics).
  - ii. Number of available emergency department beds (monitored and non-monitored)
  - iii. Number of patients and / or waiting times in emergency departments
  - iv. Number of patients waiting for inpatient beds (in emergency departments and clinics)
  - v. Number of hospitals on emergency department divert status
  - vi. Hospital and Medical Examiner morgue capacity

- vii. Shortages of medical supplies or equipment
- viii. Staff absenteeism at hospitals, clinics and morgues

5. Emergency Medical and Health Care System Response During Phases 4, 5, 6

- a. CCHD will work with the ESF 8 Group to heighten preparedness activities and monitor the impact of a pandemic on health care facilities and systems.
- b. Epidemiology Section will provide case identification criteria, laboratory testing and treatment protocols, and other case management resources to health care providers in the region.
- c. Epidemiology Section will coordinate with health care system members to assure appropriate use of antiviral medicines.
- d. The CCHD Medical Director for Clinical Operations will develop and disseminate instructions for the care of patients who can be treated at home.
- e. The ESF 8 Group will evaluate the need for and feasibility of establishing a system separate from hospital emergency departments for patient triage and clinical evaluation. The Group will develop criteria for activating and deactivating such facilities. Specific tasks may include:
  - i. Hospitals will establish separate triage areas for 1) persons presenting with possible influenza, fever or respiratory disease, and 2) persons at high risk for severe complications such as pregnant women and immuno-compromised persons.
  - ii. The Health Care Coalition will, through coordination between CCHD, hospitals, the large medical group practices and the community health centers, identify specific facilities in different geographic areas within Chatham County to serve as "flu clinics".
  - iii. CCHD will work through the ESF 8 Group to establish and promote a 24-hour telephone consulting nurse service to provide information and advice to ill persons on management of illness and accessing health care.
- f. The ESF 8 Group will develop standardized criteria for implementing the following strategies countywide, and will recommend implementation of any or all of these strategies to the Local Health Officer when pandemic conditions warrant:

- i. Canceling elective admissions and elective surgeries
  - ii. Requiring all hospitals in the county to receive and treat any patient whose condition warrants hospitalization, regardless of medical insurance coverage.
  - iii. Implementing protocols to expand internal hospital bed capacity.
  - iv. Activating alternate care facilities to conduct triage of flu patients or to provide expanded bed capacity.
  - v. Implementing early discharge protocols for patients not requiring inpatient care.
  - vi. Implementing protocols for enhanced infection control in all medical facilities.
  - vii. Monitoring and reporting of hospital-acquired influenza infections.
- g. ESF 8 Group members will identify and prioritize staff to receive antiviral medications and influenza vaccine according to the protocols established by CCHD.
  - h. Through a Public Health Order, the Local Health Officer may direct the compliance of health care providers with CCHD protocols for use of antiviral medications and influenza vaccine.
  - i. CCHD will coordinate with and support the ESF 8 Group in acquiring additional medical supplies and equipment in support of medical facilities throughout the county.
  - j. Requests for State and Federal resource support, including resources from the Strategic National Stockpile, will be managed by CCHD through local Emergency Operations Centers.

**B. Public Health Services**

1. During a pandemic, CCHD may suspend routine department operations to provide staff for flu clinics, triage centers, and telephone triage services.
2. The Local Health Officer will assess the need to reprioritize department functions and will direct the mobilization of staff to meet emerging needs of the pandemic.

3. CCHD staff with clinical training and licensure may be reassigned by the Medical Director to support the Department's critical clinical functions during a pandemic, or to alleviate staffing shortages among health care partners.

4. CCHD will continue to provide mass vaccinations to the Chatham County Jail during a pandemic, but may temporarily suspend preventive care services.

5. Public Health Services During Phases 1, 2, 3

a. All CCHD Divisions and sections are:

i. Participating in business continuity planning to identify mission critical systems and functions that must remain operational during a pandemic.

ii. Identifying CCHD services and functions that can be suspended during a pandemic thereby freeing up staff members for reassignment.

iii. Participating in ongoing planning efforts to assess skills needed during public health emergencies and identify staff training needs to fill critical positions.

b. The County Nursing Services Director and Medical Director are identifying sites and functions within the Department's clinical services that will remain operational during a pandemic and specify the minimum level of resources needed to remain operational.

c. The Chatham County Medical Examiner's Office (CCMEO) is coordinating mass fatality planning efforts with hospitals and funeral homes through the ESF 8 Group.

6. Public Health Services During Phases 4, 5, 6

a. The Local Health Officer will determine the need to suspend routine Department operations in order to reassign staff to critical duties. The timing of this decision will be coordinated with similar actions taken by other clinical facilities in the health care system.

b. Critical functions activated within CCHD may include:

i. Utilizing some or all Public Health clinics as "flu clinics" to triage, evaluate and / or treat influenza patients not requiring hospital care. The use of the Mobile Secondary Triage, Treatment, Transportation Centers(ST3C) may be indicated as well.

- ii. Establishing and supporting a public Call-Center that provides information and medical advice over the telephone, including information on how to access the health care system
  - iii. Distributing vaccine to health care system facilities and activating mass vaccination clinics to vaccinate priority groups.
- c. The CCMEO may activate the County Mass Fatalities Plan. Activation of the plan will be coordinated with hospitals and funeral homes throughout the county.
- d. Based on the numbers of actual or anticipated fatalities during a pandemic, the CCMEO may implement emergency protocols regarding:
- i. Identification and documentation of victims
  - ii. Activation and management of temporary temperature controlled holding facilities
  - iii. Release of remains to family members
  - iv. Temporary internment of mass fatalities
  - v. Cremation and burial of mass fatalities

**XI. MAINTENANCE OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES**

**XII.**

1. One of the critical needs during a flu pandemic will be to maintain essential community services.
  - a. With the possibility that 25-35% of the workforce could be absent due to illness, it may be difficult to maintain adequate staffing for certain critical functions.
  - b. There is the possibility that services could be disrupted if significant numbers of public health, law enforcement, fire and emergency response, medical care, transportation, communications, and public utility personnel are unable to carry out critical functions due to illness
2. Government agencies and private businesses, particularly those that provide essential services to the public, must develop and maintain continuity of operations plans and protocols that address the unique consequences of a pandemic.
3. Local emergency management agencies in Chatham County will lead continuity of government planning and preparedness within their jurisdictions with technical support provided by CCHD.
4. Local emergency management agencies in Chatham County will participate and in and support logistical and non-medical infrastructure planning with hospital facilities within their jurisdictions.
5. CCHD has developed continuity of operations plans that address, at a minimum:
  - a. Line of Succession for the agency.
  - b. Approval of continuity of operations plans by the County Board of Health.
  - c. Identification of mission essential services and priorities.
  - d. Procedures for the reassignment of employees to support public health functions essential during a public health emergency.
  - e. Redundancy of mission critical communication and information systems.
  - f. Physical relocation of critical CCHD functions including the Department Emergency Operations Center.

6. Maintenance of Essential Services During Phases 1, 2, 3

a. Emergency Preparedness Section works with all divisions and sections in CCHD to develop plans for maintaining essential departmental services during a pandemic.

b. Emergency Preparedness and CCHD PIO and Epidemiology Sections continue to educate government agencies, non-profit organizations and businesses that provide essential community services about the need for continuity planning in advance of a pandemic.

7. Maintenance of Essential Services During Phases 4, 5, 6

a. CCHD will update its essential services plans and will request that its community partners update their plan

b. The Local Health Officer will determine the appropriate time to implement the Department's continuity of operations plans and protocols and will advise community partners to implement their plans as needed.

## **XI. RECOVERY**

1. Recovery from an influenza pandemic will begin when it is determined that adequate supplies, resources and response system capacity exists to manage ongoing activities without continued assistance from pandemic response systems.
2. In consultation with the local ESF 8 Group and local elected leaders, the Local Health Officer will recommend specific actions to be taken to return the health care system and government functions to pre-event status.
3. CCHD will assess the impact of the pandemic on the community's health as measured by morbidity and mortality and report findings to all response partners.
4. CCHD staff will support partners in Chatham County government and the health care and business communities in assessing the economic impact of the pandemic.
5. Emergency Preparedness Section will conduct an after-action evaluation of the pandemic response. The evaluation will include recommendations for amendments to the Pandemic Influenza Response Plan

