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Gunnison Watershed School District Pandemic Plan

The Gunnison Watershed School District (GWSD) has worked with the Gunnison County Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Division (970-641-0209) and Gunnison County Emergency Management (970-641-2481) to devise plans for a pandemic flu using guidelines set forth by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). This plan's actions intend to:

a. Prevent or minimize the spread of illness through the use of education, information and if necessary, school closure
b. Preserve continuity of essential school functions
c. Minimize educational and social disruption
d. Minimize academic and economic losses

Definitions

- **Seasonal (or common) flu** is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person-to-person. Most people have some immunity and a vaccine is available.
- **Avian (or bird) flu** is caused by influenza viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. The H5N1 variant is deadly to domestic fowl and can be transmitted from birds to humans. There is no human immunity and no vaccine is available.
- **Pandemic flu** is human flu that causes a global outbreak, or pandemic, of illness. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person.
- Influenza symptoms
  - According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) influenza symptoms usually start suddenly and may include the following
    - Fever
    - Headache
    - Extreme tiredness
    - Dry cough
    - Sore throat
    - Body ache
  - Influenza is a respiratory disease
  - Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- **Infection Control Guidelines for Schools**
  - Recognize the symptoms of flu:
    - Fever
    - Cough
    - Headache
    - Body ache
  - Stay home if you are ill and remain home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever reducing medicines. Students, staff, and faculty may return 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.
  - Cover your cough:
    - Use a tissue when you cough or sneeze and put used tissue in the nearest wastebasket.
    - If tissues are not available, cough into your elbow or upper sleeve area, not your hand.
    - Wash your hands after you cough or sneeze.
  - Wash your hands:
    - Using soap and water after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
    - Using alcohol-based hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available.
  - Have regular inspections of the school hand washing facilities to assure soap and paper towels are available.

- o Follow a regular cleaning schedule of frequently touched surfaces including hand rails, door handles, computer keyboards, and restrooms using appropriate cleaners.
- o Have appropriate supplies for students and staff including tissues and waste receptacles for disposing used tissues and hand washing supplies (soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizers).

Prevention Strategies and Processes
- Before the Pandemic
  - o Planning and Preparation
    - GWSD administrators and district nurse will collaborate and coordinate with local health and emergency preparedness officials and will participate in the Incident Command System.
    - GWSD will review and update school district policies for infection control, prevention of disease transmission, and crisis and disaster response.
  - o Prevention and Education
    - Train school staff to recognize symptoms of influenza.
    - Ensure the schools are stocked with supplies for frequent hand hygiene including soap, water and paper towels.
    - Encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette in all staff and students
    - Identify students who are immune compromised or chronically ill who may be most vulnerable to serious illness. Encourage their families to talk with their health care provider regarding special precautions during influenza outbreaks.
    - Consider alternative learning strategies to continue education in the event of an influenza pandemic.
- During the Pandemic - Response
  - o Surveillance and Reporting
    - The building office managers/ office staff routinely speak to the parent of each absent student to determine if the absence is excused or unexcused. Unusual attendance patterns will be further monitored and parental report of flu-like symptoms will be documented. Information will be shared with Gunnison County Public Health.
    - School officials will coordinate with local health officials to determine if the school should cancel non-academic events or close the school.
  - o School Closure
    - GWSD Superintendent is the person empowered to close schools. The superintendent will declare the school closed in collaboration with local health officials.
    - The possibility of developing alternative learning strategies will be discussed at the time, based on the duration of school closure. School closure will result in the cancellation of all classes and extra-curricular activities. Food services provided by the schools will be discontinued. Central office functions, including payroll, will continue if possible.
  - o Internal/External Communication
    - Parents and staff will be informed about school closure and pandemic updates via school newsletters, the School Messenger System and via the school website gunnisonschools.net.
  - o Core Operations
    - GWSD will assist the county to maintain the health and safety of our citizens. GWSD will be available to address needs as determined by emergency management officials (use of schools facilities for "surge capacity', district vehicles for transportation needs, communication via website, etc).
- After the Pandemic - Recovery
  - o Continue to communicate with Gunnison County Public Health regarding the status of disease in the community and the school.
  - o Communicate with parents regarding the status of the education process. Establish a "return to learning" program to get students back on track and provide counseling to students or staff as needed.
  - o Management
    - Conduct a debriefing, assess lessons learned and damage assessment, and update plan with any new information. Transition back to the prevention and preparedness phase.