



PLANNING FOR AN EPIDEMIC/PANDEMIC EVENT

A joined resource by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health about epidemic/pandemic planning for schools, kura, early learning services, and kōhanga reo.

YOU SHOULD HAVE A PANDEMIC PLAN

Every school and early learning service should have a Pandemic Plan in place to support the health and safety of children, students and staff. Pandemic Plans should be consistent with public health planning requirements.

During an event, the Pandemic Manager needs to ensure that there is a safe working environment for those that remain and that those who are affected are supported during their recovery.

Someone will be designated as a Pandemic Manager (often the Principal or Centre Manager) to manage the impact of any outbreak in the school or early learning service for the duration of the event.

The Ministry of Education's website hosts a comprehensive guide to creating a pandemic plan:

[Pandemic planning guide](#)

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IS THE LEAD

The Ministry of Health can declare a pandemic event and provide advice and guidance about this. The Ministry of Health's Medical Officers of Health are your key external contact in a pandemic event.

They work as part of the region's response coordination team. They will provide leadership, direction and guidance on whether to remain open, close or reopen. You can find contact information for your local District Health Board.

[Local District Health Board contacts – Ministry of Health](#)

PROTECT CHILDREN, STUDENTS AND STAFF

To minimise illness among children, students, staff and visitors encourage and promote good hand washing, cough and sneeze etiquette, and follow Health advice about keeping any specific individuals away.

These resources may help promote good practices in your school and early learning service:

[WHO Protect Others Poster](#)

[Good hand washing practice](#)

Ensure you have adequate supplies of tissues, medical and hand hygiene products, and masks. It may be difficult to purchase such products once a pandemic begins.

If you have any concerns about the child's or student's health please contact Healthline on 0800 611 116, or the GP for medical advice. Healthline has translators and interpreters available.

Please refer to Communicable Diseases in Early learning services and Schools – a Guide to Legal Powers, to clarify your rights to request children, students or staff, to not attend:

[Communicable Diseases in Early learning services and Schools](#)

ENSURING A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

It is important that schools and early learning services maintain a clean environment to prevent the spread of illness. All facilities should have good ventilation and regular cleaning practices which can be increased in frequency following an outbreak.

Influenza viruses are inactivated by alcohol and by chlorine. Cleaning the surface with a neutral detergent followed by a disinfectant solution is recommended. Surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned often, preferably daily.

COMMUNICATE WITH STAFF, CHILDREN, STUDENTS AND PARENTS/WHĀNAU/CAREGIVER COMMUNITY

Keep your community regularly informed about what your school or early learning service is doing, how it is prepared and any expectations you may have. For example keeping unwell children at home, leave arrangements for staff etc. Let them know the planned ways you will communicate.

You may like to share wider welfare activities within the local community.

Keep all staff regularly informed of the pandemic plan, how to support students and staff that become ill.

You may like to include advice such as good hygiene practices, regular and thorough hand washing and/or hand sanitising, good cough and sneeze etiquette.

MAKE SURE KEY INFORMATION IS ACCESSIBLE

Your school or early learning service should have up to date contact information for:

- parents/whānau/caregivers,
- an emergency contacts list for staff and
- the different media that the public can access to receive situation updates.

Good contact information is also important for the Ministry of Health in the event that children or students are confirmed as ill, to support contact management.

Have the local District Health Board and Ministry of Education phone numbers available. Be aware that the Ministry of Education may contact you regarding your operational status via the Mataara system.

Keep your emergency contact number for the school/early learning service updated with the Ministry.

Store operating and emergency management information in known, accessible and shared locations. Paper and electronic copies should be available at your school or early learning service, and off site.

IDENTIFY ROOMS OR AREAS WITH AMENITIES

Each school and early learning service should be able to identify and implement rooms or areas with amenities for sick individuals for temporary care.

PLAN FOR STAFF ABSENCES

Consider what activities need to remain functional and what activities can be suspended. Refer to your Business Continuity Plan to ensure that critical functions are accounted for and less critical functions can be restored in a systematic way.

PLAN FOR CLOSURE

All education providers will need to take direction to remain open, close or reopen by local Medical Officers of Health or their designees, the Ministry of Health or Police.

Boards and Service Managers may make their own choices based on staffing and supervision concerns due to staff absences.

Think about the following to plan for a possible closure:

- Plan when and how to notify caregivers, families and whānau
- Plan communications with staff
- Plan communications with your local Ministry office
- Plan school transport.

SUPPORT BOARDING STUDENTS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Remind international students and their caregivers about their responsibilities under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

The school and early learning service must take all reasonable steps to protect international students, and ensure that they have a positive experience in New Zealand that supports their educational achievement.

Schools, hostels and homestays must provide adequate support for the well-being of all their students and ensure that they live in a safe environment.

Follow travel advice on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade website.

PLAN FOR RETURN

Plan to facilitate and encourage the return of children, students and staff once they are better or at the end of their stay away period.

All individuals who are no longer ill or potentially ill should be welcomed back and supported with their return to education.