

**Flu Pandemic Summit**  
**June 20, 2006**  
**Questions and Answer (Q & A) Session**

These questions were from attendees to the summit. Not all the questions could be answered during the Q & A session so they have been answered here. Please reference the Clinton County Health Department web page and other helpful links on that site for additional helpful information and guidance.

**1. Q. Where are we in the flu pandemic time line?**

- A.** [The World Health Organizations categorizes the flu pandemic into five phases. As of June 29, 2006, we are and have been for awhile at the Pandemic Alert Period – Phase 3\\*. See below.](#)

**Interpandemic period:**

- Phase 1: No new influenza virus subtypes in human; subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals
- Phase 2: As above, but circulating animal subtype poses substantial risk of human disease

**Pandemic alert period:**

- \*Phase 3: Human infection w/ new subtype, no human-to-human (HTH) spread, or rare spread to close contact
- Phase 4: Small clusters w/ limited HTH transmission, highly localized spread, suggesting virus not well adapted to human
- Phase 5: Larger clusters, but HTH spread still localized, virus increasingly better adapted to humans, but not yet fully transmissible

**Pandemic period:**

Increased and sustained transmission in general population

**2. Q. When is the flu expected to arrive in the U.S.?**

- A.** [No one knows. Global surveillance is coordinated through WHO \(World Health Organization\) on every continent for human, animal, and environmental indicators. Local, state, and federal health organizations are all participate in this huge system.](#)

**3. Q. Have local chicken farms taken appropriate precautions?**

- A.** [Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYS Agriculture and Markets as well as professional groups provide information and guidance regarding this issue.](#)

**4. Q. In terms of discussions related to ethics: How will community values be included in the decision making process? Will faith based community leaders, business leaders, parent representatives, etc. have input in the discussion (life and death) about who will get life saving care when demand exceeds availability?**

- A.** [Plans are to begin these discussions with an existing ethics committee who has representatives from many of the groups already represented. Efforts will be to share discussions and be open](#)

about the discussions such as limited resources and life saving care when demand exceeds availability.

- 5. Q. Who will be deciding the ethics part if a pandemic happens? Will it be federal, state or local?**

A. See the previous question. Guidelines will be used from all sectors.
- 6. Q. If school is out of session for a prolonged period of time will students still be able to graduate and how will that time be made up?**

A. This issue is being address through New York State Education Department (NYSED) however a local representative from CVES (Champlain Education Services) stated at the summit that it would be reasonable to make some adjustments. Details will be available through your local BOCES or school once NYSED releases their guidance to the schools.
- 7. Q. What department or who will make decisions on closures of public facilities, schools, etc.?**

A. Several groups (schools, public health, emergency services) have the authority and will collaborate make these decisions. Communication and coordination will occur through the County Emergency Operation Center to alleviate confusion and help the public understand the rationale behind the decisions.
- 8. Q. Absentee volunteer fire personnel may be a reality during a pandemic. What sort of backup can be expected for fire and ambulance response?**

A. Local and Regional mutual aid plans will be expanded to address a flu pandemic to maximize limited resources.
- 9. Q. What kind of businesses will be closed? Who will make them “close”? Is it ethical to ask businesses like malls and theaters to close in a pandemic?**

A. Businesses and schools will be asked to close to help stop the spread of the disease. Since vaccine and antivirals probably will not be available initially for up to 6 months, reducing exposure is one of the only means to reduce the spread of diseases. Many people will decide on their own not to expose themselves unnecessarily. Local public health has the authority to “close” businesses and coordination will occur through the County Emergency Operations Center.
- 10. Q. Is there a method to determine if your staff qualifies for essential services in the eyes of hospital/health department? Is there some kind of list to be put on?**

A. There is no current list to be put on. Generally speaking, essential services includes those who maintain the infrastructure of our community, health care workers, fire, police to name just a few. However, the categories may change based on the specifics surrounding the pandemic such as who is the most vulnerable.
- 11. Q. How will the media be utilized in the event of a flu pandemic?**

A. The media will have a critical role to keep the public informed. Efforts by local emergency planners will be to keep the media informed routinely, often, and plans are to work with them now to decide the best way to do this. Fortunately, local media has proven to be highly responsive and professional when public health has needed their assistance. In turn public health tries to assist them with their needs.

**12. Q. When are agencies going to start really education the “general public”, like they did with understanding HIV?**

A. Part of the NYS Department of Health plan is to develop a media campaign directed at the general public, it should be available by this Fall 2006.

**13. Q. Please define EAP.**

A. Employee Assistance Program is also referenced as Employee Assistance Services. These are confidential and free services for employees and immediate family members of member organizations. They offer assistance with issues affecting your work and life. For more information, call 1-800-724-0747 or 1-518-563-8293.

**14. Q. What can I tell my town board, Ellenburg, about their participation in pandemic flu preparedness? Please be specific.**

A. It would be important that they have plans for general preparedness/ disasters since this is the basis for an influenza pandemic. Having training in NIMS (National Incident Management System) and ICS (Incident Command System which is a component of NIMS) is important to understand how responses are organized. Many of the handouts at the summit would be helpful to the town board. Training in NIMS or further discussions can be coordinated through Clinton County Emergency Services at 565-4791. Being specific starts with understanding the general concepts and that might be specific issues for the individual town for example knowing your vulnerable shut ins in your community; how might you perform door to door checks, etc.

**15. Q. How will coordination between/among county and “local” (village/towns) ensue after this Summit? (vs site by site. Independent plans?)**

A. County Officials including Health, Emergency Services, County Government, etc will disseminate ongoing and new information via the normal communication routes. It is important that any community wide response including an influenza pandemic be coordinated through County Emergency Services at the Emergency Operation Center using NIMS and ICS structures and practices.

**16. Q. If the pandemic arrives and deaths occur in the numbers anticipated, what plans are in place with the local funeral homes, etc. to handle the bodies? How contagious is a dead body?**

A. Clinton County has a mass fatality plan that included funeral home director input. This group has also attended a variety of trainings held over the last few years on mass fatality. Minimal handling of a dead body would be prudent until a funeral home professional can

be called. Good hand washing would be advisable after handling or caring for a dead body.

17. **Q. Where are the funeral home people? Where will we bury/cremate so many who die in a wave?**
- A. See the answer to # 16; the plan could be adjusted based on the need at the time.
18. **Q. What is Clinton County's plan for the dead? Mass graves?**
- A. Clinton County has a mass fatality plan that can be implemented in the event existing morgue and funeral home services become overwhelmed.
19. **Q. Often times people hesitate to make a doctor's appointment as they've been previously been advised that a virus can't be treated. By the time they make an appointment their illness has progressed to bronchitis/pneumonia. How/when do providers determine prescribing an antiviral vs. an antibiotic?**
- A. It is really case based on age and the health condition of the person. Information about signs and symptoms to be aware of will be made available to the public and during a pandemic resources such as a phone hot line may be used to help answer specific questions. Information will be based on the unique characteristics of the influenza pandemic virus.
20. **Q. If you don't have an understanding policy for sick time presently, how are you going to get employees to believe they should stay home during a pandemic?**
- A. Reviewing current sick policies for an influenza pandemic is an important part of pre-pandemic planning. Additional protocols may be necessary for the employer to help workers and customers understand the unique and serious implication of a pandemic.
21. **Q. Are there any masks that work to prevent the spread of influenza?**
- A. At this time it does not look like general use of masks for the public will be worthwhile since people can be infectious or capable of spreading the virus up to 24 hours before they feel sick or have any symptoms. However, when a person becomes symptomatic and must care for a sick person, a paper surgical type mask should be worn to avoid exposing others. Health Care Workers also wear specialized masks when performing certain types of care.
22. **Q. If a pandemic did happen, would surgical masks help those caring for others?**
- A. See the answer to # 21.
23. **Q. What type PPE should be stockpiled at the business/home setting?**
- A. Please also refer to the answer in #21. General preparations such as stockpiling food, water, and other recommendations as outlined in a brochure titled *Disaster Preparedness – Preparation Guide for Emergencies* on the Clinton County Health Department influenza pandemic web page will be most beneficial.

24. **Q. Will food be available for those needing to purchase items?**
- A. Part of the pre pandemic planning is to purchase up to two weeks of nonperishable foods for each family member. Individuals need to make these efforts now since emergency supplies would quickly run out if everyone waited for someone else to provide food for them. The supply can be purchased gradually each week to avoid a sudden large expense. Store in a dry, cool, place and rotate to keep expiration dates current if this applies.
25. **Q. What has the hospital actually done? How ready are they?**
- A. The CVPH Medical Center has been a part of the local planning group addressing an influenza pandemic and the NYS Department of Health as required public health and the hospital to meet certain deliverables/ or components of a plan. They are current with all requirements and continue to work with other community partners in preparing the entire community for an influenza pandemic.
26. **Q. How long is the virus viable on a surface?**
- A. The influenza virus can survive on surfaces or an inanimate object (fomite) from one hour to one day. Humidity can play a role. During the winter when humidity is low, it can survive up to two days on surfaces or other inanimate objects.
27. **Q. Will phone triage start at fire control so that EMS units don't bring the sick to the hospital or need to respond to the ill and risk getting sick themselves?**
- A. Triage will be utilized and 911 emergency control will be a part of the plan to ensure timely, safe, and appropriate care is given to each person in need.
28. **Q. What if anything should be done with company ventilation? (filters, closing down, increasing fresh air supply, etc.)**
- A. No specific changes need to be made since the influenza virus is not considered an airborne virus. Try to avoid working in crowded areas. Strive to maintain at least three feet of distance between workers.
29. **Q. Will you make vaccines mandatory for health care workers since many don't get them now?**
- A. There are no requirements at this time. The annual seasonal influenza vaccine is highly recommended for health care workers.
30. **Q. Will vaccines taken now build up any immunity for future flu?**
- A. No, in order to have an influenza pandemic occur, it must be a novel or new strain that people will have no protection against. The annual influenza vaccine can keep you healthier so if a novel strain does infect you your body may theoretically be better able to fight off the new pandemic strain. People over 65 years and those with chronic diseases should have the pneumonia vaccine to help prevent one of the complications of influenza.
31. **Q. What about the vaccine that the government is stockpiling against avian flu? Will**

**that protect people in a pandemic situation?**

- A. Currently there is no stockpile of avian flu vaccine. Efforts are under way to have the ability make some avian flu vaccine to theoretically be able to “jump start” production when a flu pandemic occurs and **IF** the virus would be an avian type. Since it is unknown what the virus will be that triggers a flu pandemic it would not be prudent to mass produce any vaccine at this time. Efforts are also under way to change how influenza vaccines are made since they currently rely on growing the vaccine utilizing an egg medium that takes up to 6 months for vaccine to be produced.

**32. Q. What is the public health role? What has been done so far?**

- A. As with any biological event public health will have a lead role in an influenza pandemic. Together with the NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) Public Health Workgroup, public health and other partners have developed plans, tools, and educational resources for key partners and the public about an influenza pandemic. Much work and preparation has been done in emergency planning since 9/11 which serves as a base to the additional influenza pandemic planning.

**33. Q. What is the home care (CHHA-No. Country Home services, Hospice) roles in this operation?**

- A. They are part of the public health system and will assist with the County’s surge plan to continue health care services in the community.

**34. Q. Will there be any “mobile” medical care staff that will go to people’s homes to give knowledge or instruction on how to care for their family members?**

- A. Utilizing limited resources efficiently will be the priority throughout the pandemic. Alternative medical care facilities are possible choices. The Clinton County NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) Public Health Workgroup will be developing specifics that will cover across the health care spectrum from acute/hospital care to advising on care to be provided in the home.

Basic support and comfort care information will be distributed through pamphlets, the Clinton County Health Department web page, and the media to assist families.

**35. Q. No one spoke of home care or mental health roles or Red Cross? What about ARC’s-Nursing Homes?**

- A. They are all part of the public health system and many of them have emergency plans and are now developing specific influenza pandemic plans. Staff at these agencies have also been trained in Incident Command System and are aware of how to coordinate responses with County Emergency Services. As specifics in the County influenza pandemic continue to evolve, these agencies will be included appropriately.

**36. Q. We heard what has to be done...what has been done?**

- A. As with any biological event public health will have a lead role in an influenza pandemic. Together with the NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) Public Health Workgroup, public

health and other partners have developed plans, tools, and educational resources for key partners and the public about an influenza pandemic. Much work and preparation has been done in emergency planning since 9/11 which serves as a base to the additional influenza pandemic planning.

37. **Q. What planning is being done at the county jail level and Department of Corrections?**
- A. The County Sheriff Department participates with the NBC Public Health Workgroup planning, DOC falls under the jurisdiction of the State and any planning would be coordinated with NYS Department of Health.
38. **Q. Wheel chair bound (paralyzed) tenants in a remote HUD facility require daily care- HUD facilities and senior tenants are not equipped or trained to administer care-will they be evacuated by ER personnel? Facility does not have the ability to move or evacuate these tenants.**
- A. These type facilities should have plans for general emergencies including evacuation and additional contingency plans including a influenza pandemic. If they do not the state agency that regulates them will be able to provide assistance and guidance.
39. **Q. Since a large percentage (approx.80%) of our prescriptions is produce overseas has any plan been made to deal with medical prescription shortages?**
- A. Note: the 80% figure has not been verified. However, supplies of many items will be disrupted during a influenza pandemic. The federal government is responsible for issues that cross state and national borders.
40. **Q. Have plans been made to allow seniors to stockpile their medications at the first sign of an actual pandemic?**
- A. *Stockpiling* personal prescriptions should be discussed with your health care provider and they can direct you on when the time will be right to begin. Special regulations may apply.
41. **Q. As county prepares for pandemic conditions, will Medicare/Medicaid allow stockpiling meds w/chronic health conditions as movement will be limited and stores not open for needs?**
- A. The state and federal government has jurisdiction to pursue these type waivers.
42. **Q. Will insurance companies be asked to change policies regarding limiting medications for chronic conditions i.e.; 30 day supply can't be refilled until day 27?**
- A. The state and federal government has jurisdiction to pursue these type waivers.
43. **Q. Have pharmacists been invited to pandemic discussions?**

A. Two pharmacy consultants are involved when needed at the NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) Public Health Workgroup to provide specific input regarding community preparedness and pharmaceutical issues.

44. Q. **What is being done to allow for adequate medications?**

A. The NYS Department of Health and federal government has plans to address this.

45. Q. **How much do pharmacies keep on hand?**

A. The NYS Department of Health coordinates this type information.

46. Q. **Should we have signs telling people not to feed the ducks at our marina?**

A. Since the avian flu is not in the United States, this is not necessary at this time. For more information on birds and handling them, please see the Health Department web page.

47. Q. **How are flu-related deaths of animals (pets/livestock) to be handled?**

Several state agencies have developed a coordinated plan to address these issues if the avian flu were to show up in the United States. Department of Environmental Conservation, Agriculture and Markets, and the New York State Department of Health are just a few.