

**Pandemic Preparedness Plan Required by NYS Law**

**Town of Belfast**

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A new state law requires all New York State public employers to adopt a plan for operations in the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease. Plans must be finalized and published by April 1, 2021. This plan is being developed during the current COVID-19 world-wide pandemic. Much of what has been developed is based on the current level of infection, the level of contagion in comparison to the numbers who have developed symptoms and death. While this pandemic has been the worst to impact the United States in 100 years there may be other pandemics in years to come that are potentially either more or less of an impact. Contagion levels will potentially change the need to reconsider the essential, non-essential and those who would need to be furloughed at a time in the future. Historically the influenza [flu] has been one of the primary concerns in the US and thus much of the CDC's information on pandemics has been based on the Flu. It is useful to understand that there are expected intervals in a pandemic and these are described below from the CDC website in the influenza pandemic scenario:

#### **Pandemic Intervals Framework (PIF)**

The [Pandemic Intervals Framework \(PIF\)](#) describes the progression of an influenza pandemic using six intervals. This framework is used to guide influenza pandemic planning and provides recommendations for risk assessment, decision-making, and action in the United States. These intervals provide a common method to describe pandemic activity which can inform public health actions. The duration of each pandemic interval might vary depending on the characteristics of the virus and the public health response.

#### **Description of the Six Pandemic Intervals**

##### **Interval 1) Investigation of cases of novel influenza A virus infection in humans**

**Description** When [novel influenza A viruses are identified in people](#), public health actions focus on targeted monitoring and investigation. This can trigger a risk assessment of that virus with the [Influenza Risk Assessment Tool \(IRAT\)](#), which is used to evaluate if the virus has the potential to cause a pandemic.

##### **Interval 2) Recognition of increased potential for ongoing transmission of a novel influenza A virus**

**Description** When increasing numbers of human cases of novel influenza A illness are identified and the virus has the potential to spread from person-to-person, public health actions focus on control of the outbreak, including treatment of sick persons.

##### **Interval 3) Initiation of a pandemic wave**

**Description** A pandemic occurs when people are easily infected with a novel influenza A virus that has the ability to spread in a sustained manner from person-to-person.

##### **Interval 4) Acceleration of a pandemic wave**

**Description** The acceleration (or "speeding up") is the upward epidemiological curve as the new virus infects susceptible people. Public health actions at this time may focus on the use of appropriate [non-pharmaceutical interventions](#) in the community (e.g. [school and child-care facility closures](#), [social distancing](#)), as well the use of medications (e.g. [antivirals](#)) and vaccines, if available. These actions combined can reduce the spread of the disease, and prevent illness or death.

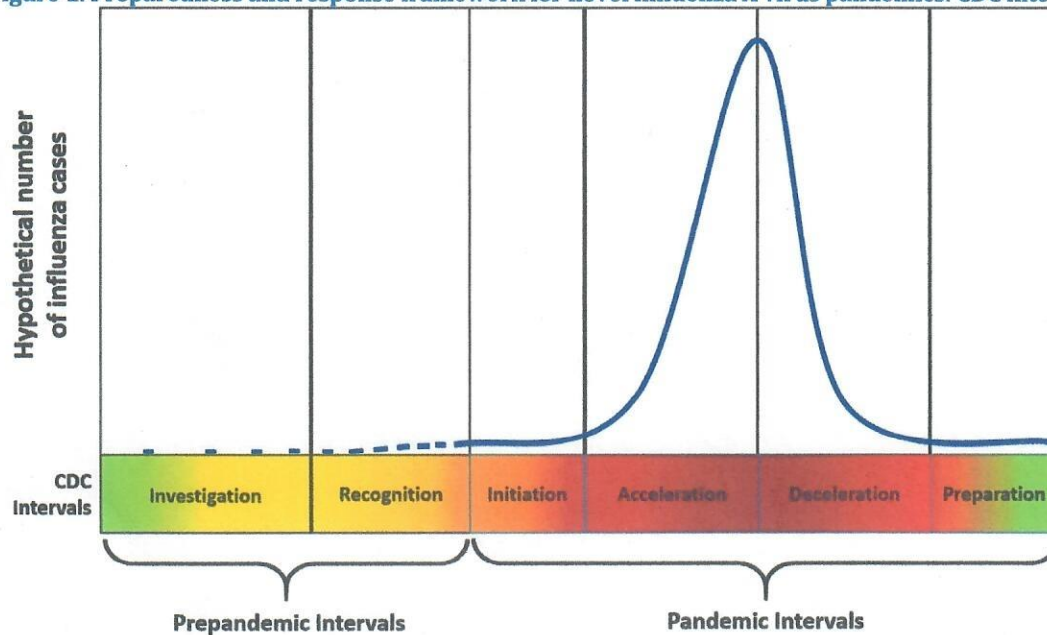
##### **Interval 5) Deceleration of a pandemic wave**

**Description** The deceleration (or "slowing down") happens when pandemic influenza cases consistently decrease in the United States. Public health actions include continued vaccination, monitoring of pandemic influenza A virus circulation and illness, and reducing the use of non-pharmaceutical interventions in the community (e.g. [school closures](#)).

Interval 6) Preparation for future pandemic waves

**Description** When pandemic influenza has subsided, public health actions include continued monitoring of pandemic influenza A virus activity and preparing for potential additional waves of infection. It is possible that a 2<sup>nd</sup> pandemic wave could have higher severity than the initial wave. An influenza pandemic is declared ended when enough data shows that the influenza virus, worldwide, is similar to a seasonal influenza virus in how it spreads and the severity of the illness it can cause.

**Figure 1. Preparedness and response framework for novel influenza A virus pandemics: CDC intervals**



In addition to describing the progression of a pandemic, certain indicators and assessments are used to define when one interval moves into another. CDC uses two tools (the Influenza Risk Assessment Tool and the Pandemic Severity Assessment Framework) to evaluate the pandemic risk that a new influenza A virus can pose. The results from both of these assessments are used to guide federal, state and local public health decisions.

Please refer to the "Updated Preparedness and Response Framework for Influenza Pandemics" for more information about the Pandemic Intervals Framework and how it guides federal, state, and local public health actions.

**The document below represents the Town of Belfast Pandemic Response Plan.**



New state law requires all New York State public employers to adopt a plan for operations in the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease. Plans must be finalized and published by April 1, 2021. The document below represents the current Town Pandemic Response Plan.

## I. Approval Process for the Plan

The Plan will be submitted to the Town Board for the first meeting in March. Comments from the Town Board and any other commenters will be accepted until one week from the day of the first meeting in March at 4:00 PM. The Final Plan will be completed. The plan will also be available online at the Town website.

## II. Employees

Town recognizes that every pandemic situation will have different acceptable parameters related to the actual infection. Executive Orders by the President of the United States, the New York State Governor, and/or State of Emergency by the town Supervisor will be directing the level of response and impact to operations. The Town will work to the extent applicable and possible to follow the civil service rules, union contracts, labor laws and collective bargaining agreements during these events.

### **Full Stay at Home Order Level (Less than 25% of employees allowed to work):**

In the case where full quarantine and stay at home orders were in place we deemed that some employees would still need to be on-site and considered essential. These are generally related to Health, Public Safety, Public Works, IT and Emergency Management. A certain number of employees will still need to report to their place of work in order for these basic functions to continue. All other employees who could perform their duties remotely would be setup with the technology that they need to undertake their work.

### **Partial Stay at Home Order Level (25% to 99% of employees allowed to work):**

If the pandemic were not to the full level of quarantine/stay-at-home order then we foresee a hybrid model for certain other "essential" employees wherein they can safely perform their work either at their office space and/or at home working remotely in a mixed shift model. Some employees, while important under normal situations, cannot do their work from home and the Town can operate without these tasks for a limited period of time while the major pandemic state of emergency is in operation. This last category that cannot perform their duties at home and cannot be allowed to work on-site for health and safety reasons would be considered truly non-essential during a pandemic.

State of Emergency will control this status. If offices can return to partial or near normal levels of staff there may continue to be limited access to buildings by outside public and certain meetings and tasks may not be able to be completed during the State of Emergency. The Town



has developed levels of protocols during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic that can be utilized in the Partial Stay at Home Order Level for operations and working with the public.

#### A. Titles considered Required to be essential to be on-site:

The table below lists and describes positions and titles that are considered essential (physically present) in the event of a state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce.

Department	Title	Justification
<b>Town office</b>	Town Supervisor	To Manage Pandemic
<b>Water Dept.</b>	Water Supt.	Needed to Check Water
<b>Highway Dept.</b>	Highway Supt.	Needed to Check Roads
<b>Highway Dept.</b>	Labor-Operator	Needed to keep roads open

#### B. Titles that can work remote:

The table below lists and describes positions and titles that can work remotely in the event of a state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce.

Department	Title	Justification
<b>Town Clerk office</b>	Town Clerk	Can REDUCE HOURS At OFFICE.
<b>Town Justice office</b>	Judge	Can REDUCE HOURS AT OFFICE


### C. Titles that are not deemed essential and cannot work remote:

The table below lists and describes positions and titles that are not deemed essential and cannot work remote in the event of a state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce.

Department	Title	Justification

## III. On-Site Protocols

### A. Work Shifts



The normal work shifts are set by each Department in accordance with the Town and through Union Contracts. Some departments are staffed 7 days a week or they are on-call at all hours. Many would need the ability to work remotely or have multiple shifts. These changes would be in response to a designated State of Emergency within the Town. Shifts would be set depending on the particular level of distancing and allowable interaction for the pandemic conditions.

Town will utilize all means at its disposal to document the hours and work locations for essential employees, including off site visits. Such means may include, but are not limited to:

- Time Clocks and/or Time Sheets (if applicable)
- Door Access Records/Security Camera Records
- Daily Sign-in Logs/Reports

## B. Contact Tracing

Town Employees are located at 3 locations in Town. If state or local authorities decide there is a need for reduction in in-office staff and increased social distancing measures within the workplace or at worksites, Town will directly follow federal and state orders. In the event that there are no current federal or state orders for a reduction in density, the Town will defer to this document which can be distributed by the Town Representative to all Town Employees.

Town will utilize Protocols for documenting precise hours and work locations, including off-site visits, for essential employees and contractors. The protocol shall be used to aid in tracking of the disease and to identify the population of exposed employees and contractors in order to facilitate the provision of any benefits which may be available to certain employees and contractors on that basis.

The Town will perform all employment-based contact tracing in the event of a positive case. New York State, CDC and other protocols that are in effect for a particular pandemic will control the method of tracing. Each disease has different issues associated with it and it's own proper protocols. Tracing will be done as part of the larger method in place. Town Employee specific interactions will be traced as required for the incidents. Departments and Employees are encouraged to keep track of outside interactions that may cause a potential tracing issue.

## C. PPE – Personal Protective Equipment Protocols

Town Dept. heads will be responsible for ensuring that their employees have access to and proper training & use of PPE. Please note that the use of PPE is a last resort in the hierarchy of controls and other measures such as eliminating the hazard, replacing the hazard, engineering controls, and administrative controls come before the use of PPE. To ensure that employees comply with all PPE requirements, Town will implement & enforce, at a minimum, the following requirements:

- Employees must wear face coverings at all times when in direct contact with members of the public, in shared hallways, stairwells, and public use areas. They are also required to wear face coverings at any time when they are unable to maintain 6' social distancing.



- Provide training to all staff to include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly use PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE based on the Town procedures.
- All members of the public are required to wear face coverings at all times while at Town work sites.
- Employees must be in possession of an acceptable face covering at all times which may be provided at no-cost to the employee.
- Town is responsible for having an adequate supply of PPE.
- Face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use or when damaged or soiled, may not be shared, and should be properly stored or discarded.

Town will utilize protocol to procure the appropriate personal protective equipment for essential employees and contractors, based upon the various tasks and needs of such employees and contractors in a quantity sufficient to provide at least two pieces of each type of personal protective equipment to each essential employee and contractor during any given work shift over at least six months. Town will store equipment in secure location to prevent degradation and permit immediate access in the event of an emergency declaration.

#### D. Paper Materials and Mail Distribution

Town has designated Town Supervisor to handle all paper materials and mail distribution to employees working remotely..

### IV. Off-Site Protocols

Town will enable all non-essential employees to telecommute including but not limited to:

- Facilitating the procurement, distribution, downloading and installation of any needed devices or technology including software, data, office laptops or cell phones
- Transferring of office phone lines to personal cell phones as practicable or applicable to the workplace.

### V. Exposure Protocols

#### A. Response to Exposure by Employees

The Town and employees will utilize the following guidelines in response to any and all exposures:

- The Town Dept. head will issue official quarantine/isolation orders to the appropriate individuals and notify Town Supervisor of any quarantine/isolation orders for employees of the Town.
- Employees must contact Town Supervisor regarding FMLA or sick leave.
- Town will choose a designated staff member who will receive basic information regarding the employee in Quarantine/Isolation. This staff member will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement & is the only person who will receive this information.
- A Dept. head will notify The Town Supervisor if a building needs deep cleaning.
- Any employee that receives a Quarantine/Isolation order is not permitted to enter a Town work site until the Town Supervisor receives an official release.



- Such protocol shall not involve any action that would violate any existing federal, state, or local law, including regarding sick leave or health information privacy.

## B. Emergency Housing for Exposed Employees Protocols

In the case of a Town employee who is considered essential and should not leave the Town buildings in order to continue to stay healthy and available: The Town has access to approximately [4 cots that could be used at locations where work is being conducted if it is absolutely required to continue services.

## VI. Incident Violation Response Protocols

All employees should report any violations of the guidelines in this document from fellow employees/contractors to Town Supervisor for official record keeping and to ensure the safety of all workspaces.

The Town website will have a designated webpage and hotline that will allow employees to report alleged violations of any state law, regulation, rule or guidance related to occupational health and safety involving a communicable disease, including but not limited to the novel coronavirus COVID-19. This reporting will allow for anonymous submissions to ensure the reporter does not face repercussions.

Town prohibits taking any retaliatory action for reporting or inquiring about alleged improper or wrongful activity. Town will not tolerate any form of retaliation against an employee for making a good faith report of potential Town related legal or policy violations. No employee shall be adversely affected because they refused to carry out a directive which constitutes fraud or is in violation of local, state, federal or other applicable laws and regulations. Any attempted or actual retaliatory action will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.