



**TOWN OF WESTWOOD
EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

PANDEMIC PLANNING MANUAL

AUGUST 2009

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OVERVIEW

The Town of Westwood is responsible for providing services to the residents and businesses of Westwood, Massachusetts. The potential pandemic influenza¹ could disrupt the continuity of operations for provisions of essential and other community services, including governmental and business functions. Should that occur, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen may proclaim a pandemic influenza emergency.

Emergency staffing and backfilling of existing positions will be of primary concern in order to provide essential and ongoing services to the public. In the event that essential services are adequately staffed, non-essential services may be staffed, to the extent possible.

This manual is meant to complement department operational plans. It does not limit department authority to make operational decisions as to essential or needed functions.

The following assumptions were made in drafting this manual:

- The provisions of the Town of Westwood Charter, Personnel Policies, collective bargaining agreements, and any other applicable rules and regulations must be followed.
- No State or Federal laws dealing with personnel issues have been waived.
- Town functions and services will be staffed in priority order.
- Up to thirty to forty percent of our workforce may be too sick to come to work at some point during this type of pandemic and some of those who fall ill could die.
- A pandemic could last six to eight weeks and include several waves over the course of one year.
- School and daycare closings may have a significant impact on workforce availability.
- Fear of infection and necessary dependant care may affect employees' attendance.
- The Town may be required to provide additional services not currently performed, such as supporting people who have been placed in isolation and quarantine by the Westwood Board of Health.
- Employees may need personal protective equipment (PPE) to maintain critical services which will require special policies, procedures, testing, and training.
- Disruption of manufacturing and transportation will limit the availability of supplies.

¹ An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak that occurs when a new influenza Type A virus causes serious human illness and spreads easily from person to person.

- Assistance from outside organizations, county, state, and federal government will be limited if the outbreak is nationwide.

This manual provides staffing strategies, tools, advice, and directives that departments should follow in the event that the Board of Selectmen proclaims a pandemic influenza emergency for the Town. Human Resources processes may be simplified and the administration of collective bargaining provisions narrowed in order to meet exigent staffing needs.

The effect of the provisions of this manual confer no new privilege, right of appeal, right of position, transfer, demotion, promotion, nor reinstatement for any Town of Westwood employee, contract worker, or volunteer. This manual does not constitute an express or implied contract. It provides general guidance that cannot form the basis of a private right of action.

Section 1

Priority Designations for Town Functions and Services

Major recommended action: Departments need to move to the next phase in their planning by identifying primary personnel (if not already completed) and secondary personnel for priority services. Departments need to review the definitions of priority services and begin cross training.

Advanced Planning: Staff should be informed of their priority designation and expectations.

The Town of Westwood is using the following priority designations and definitions to categorize all Town functions and services:

- **Priority 1 Services** = Public Safety and Security
Immediate threat to public health and/or safety. Activities that must remain uninterrupted. Generally, these would be agencies that operate 24 hours per day. For instance, fire suppression, law enforcement, and emergency medical operations are priority one services.
- **Priority 2 Services** = Essential and Core Services
Activities that can be disrupted temporarily or might be periodic in nature, but must be re-established within a few days. For example, processing payroll, payment to vendors and benefit payments to individuals would generally be considered priority two services. Economic impact and chaos may develop if services are not delivered after a few days.
- **Priority 3 Services** = Necessary Services
Activities required by law or rule and can be suspended by executive order or emergency declaration. Activities that can be disrupted temporarily (a few days or weeks), but must be re-established sometime before the pandemic wave is over (less than 6 weeks). For example, license renewals would be considered priority three services.
- **Priority 4 Services** = Inconvenient but recoverable after several weeks without it.
Services that can be suspended during an emergency and are not by law or rule. Activities that can be deferred for the duration of a pandemic influenza (6 – 8 weeks). For example, educational programs, training, and general maintenance programs would generally be considered priority four services.

As of July 2009, all Town of Westwood offices have categorized its functions and services accordingly. Departments are now working on communicating this information to employees. If not already complete, the next steps are as follows:

- A. Departments shall identify the conditions that activate the plan. For example, the Board of Selectmen has proclaimed an emergency; *or* although the Town emergency has not been proclaimed, a department head has received authority from the Town Administrator to

activate the plan because the influenza pandemic has had negative impact on the business continuity of his or her department.

- B. Departments shall **predetermine primary personnel for each of the priority areas** and the minimum number of staff necessary to perform the functions.
1. Departments should identify **secondary personnel** that have the skills and abilities to perform other functions. Such personnel may be:
 - a. Employees in the same classification series as those who normally perform the function.
 - b. Employees who have previously performed the work and are currently employed elsewhere in organizations within the Town.
 - c. Employees who can be trained either in advance of the need or on-the-job when the need arises.
 2. Departments should identify other personnel who may be available to perform the priority functions. Such personnel may include **retired employees, former employees, temporary workers, and volunteers.**

Section 2

Lines of Succession and Delegation of Authority

Major recommended action: Management lines of succession need to be identified and documented. Pandemic influenza could affect the absentee rates of more management staff than in other emergencies.

Advanced Planning: Departments must predetermine lines of succession and provide for access to information.

The following section provides guidance and direction to assist departments to develop plans for identifying lines of management succession and delegation of authority in the event of a pandemic influenza emergency.

- A. Departments must establish a **management line of succession plan**. A line of succession provides a list of predetermined alternates for key leadership positions in each department.
1. The succession should be **three employees in depth**, where possible. The personnel identified for the line of succession should know the operations of the department. They should also have the confidence of the principal to act in his or her absence; clearly understand the scope of the powers and duties delegated to him or her; and clearly understand the constraints, if any, of the powers and authorities delegated.
 2. The succession plan should clearly **identify the names of designated personnel**, their regular titles, and how they can be contacted. (Consider forwarding any home phones, work cell-phones, pagers, and/or email necessary to the person assuming the powers and duties.)
 3. The names and **order of succession** for designated personnel must be *communicated* to department personnel.
 4. If all of the personnel identified for the line of succession are unavailable (which may be the case in small departments where there is a limited number of leadership personnel), the department should provide for **alternate lines of succession**. It should identify personnel outside of the department who can assume the powers and duties. The line of succession plan should be updated whenever staff changes occur.
 5. Departments should construct a method by which those in the line of succession will have **access to information** and needed items, *e.g.* computer passwords, calendars for employee approved time off, office keys, file cabinet keys, etc., should they have to assume leadership responsibilities.
 6. Succession plans shall be documented and provided by the department director to the Emergency Operations Manager.

Section 3 Reporting to Work

Major recommended action: Current policy and procedures apply.

Advanced Planning: Staff should be informed of their priority designation and expectations; employees should have a family care succession plan in place; employees who are assigned some priority services may have to telecommute to perform duties and should be equipped to do so in advance.

The Priority Services designations and are definitions outlined in Section 1 provide the foundation for who must report to work, and when to report to work during a pandemic emergency. All first responders must report to work. The Town Administrator and/or Board of Selectmen, in conjunction with the Emergency Operations Center and the State, will determine the Town's priority level at any given time during a pandemic emergency.

Staff should be informed of their priority designation and expectations. **Each employee's role in a pandemic emergency:**

- Is determined by his/her department
- Is part of an organized response set forth in the Town's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.
- May change during the emergency.
- Requires that s/he be prepared to respond.
- Requires that his/her family be prepared also.

The best way for employees to ensure their family's safety is to report to work and perform the work assigned.

Closure of Schools and Daycare Facilities

To minimize the effect of any disease outbreak, the Health Department may order disease control measures that include the broad array of action. Isolation and quarantine orders and social distancing measures are likely to be used in a pandemic influenza event. In addition to closing large social gatherings, such as sporting events, theater shows, concerts, and other venues, the State may close schools and large daycare centers as a social distancing strategy. It is anticipated that this action would occur in coordination with any emergency proclamation that may emanate from the Board of Selectmen.

School and daycare closure is expected to have a significant cascading effect on staff absenteeism in both private and public sectors. The Town of Westwood must be prepared for a reduction in its staff resulting from healthy parents staying home to take care of healthy children or other healthy

dependants. If schools and daycare centers are closed, employees will **not be allowed to bring their children to work.**

- A. **Personnel Responsibilities for Priority 1 Services** must report to work, notwithstanding school and daycare closures.
- B. **Personnel Responsibilities for Priority 2 Services** must report to work within three days, notwithstanding school and daycare closures.
- C. **Personnel Responsibilities for Priority 3 Services** should make every effort to report to work in the event of school and daycare closures and must report to work within three weeks, notwithstanding school and daycare closures, unless directed otherwise.
- D. **Personnel Responsibilities for Priority 4 Services** should make every effort to report to work in the event of school and daycare closures, unless directed otherwise.

All personnel, regardless of Priority level designation, should have a family care plan in place. In the event that child and dependant care coverage becomes impossible, personnel may use accrued vacation or accrued compensatory time for such an absence or may request approval for leave without pay, depending on the employee's priority level designation. Sick leave may not be used by healthy parents who are staying home to take care of children or other dependants due to lack of daycare arrangements.

Employees may be required to work on different priorities due to pandemic.

Section 4 Remote Access

Major recommended action: Current policy and procedures apply.

Advanced Planning: Remote access and associated technological needs must be identified and implemented as soon as possible.

Remote access means that an employee is temporarily working one or more days from home instead of commuting to his or her centrally-located worksite due to extenuating circumstances. **Remote access is not appropriate for all employees and no employee is entitled or guaranteed the opportunity for remote access.**

The purpose is to provide support for **social distancing** or other pandemic response goals as necessary to respond to a pandemic influenza emergency. These modifications apply only to pandemic planning and response for employees that have been identified as appropriate personnel for remote access.

A. **Departments should identify the possibility of having to use temporary remote access as soon as possible and make the necessary technological arrangements.**

1. Departments Heads may have remote access available on an as-needed basis, including a pandemic influenza emergency.
2. Departments shall **identify individuals and priority functions that may be accomplished remotely** and what the person performing the function needs access to on the systems and applications or only email and/or voice communications.
3. Departments shall consider **alternate work schedules** for those authorized for remote access to reduce peak demands on Information Technology systems.
4. Employees can access their email accounts and public folders from any computer with internet access. There is no additional set-up or cost, however, the access is limited only to email and their folders. Employees cannot access other systems or applications. The web address for email is as follows:

wwmail.town.westwood.ma.us

Section 5 Working-Out-of-Grade Assignments And Temporary Employees

Major recommended action: Current policy and procedures apply.

Advanced Planning: Departments should identify areas where working out-of-grade (WOOG) assignments are expected to occur.

Administration of WOOG will continue in accordance with the Town of Westwood collective bargaining agreements and Personnel Policies.

A WOOG assignment is **defined** as the temporary assignment of an employee to an existing higher-level classification when the higher-level duties and responsibilities comprise the majority of the work performed.

- A. Only in the event that an employee is **assigned to higher-level duties performing at least 80% of essential job functions of the higher-level position will s/he be paid WOOG**. WOOG pay is not appropriate where an employee is simply assigned different duties which are not higher-level duties or where an employee is simply assigned to work in a different department if the work performed does not involve higher-level duties.
- B. Employees may be assigned to perform **duties of an equal or lower classification**, without reduction in base pay.
- C. Managers must keep good documentation on assignments and inform payroll staff as soon as possible.
- D. During a pandemic emergency, hiring may include temporary employees.

Section 6 Volunteer Services

Major recommended action: Current policy and procedures apply.

Advanced Planning: Departments should compile a list of potential volunteers.

During a pandemic influenza emergency, departments may wish to utilize the services of volunteers. Generally, volunteers are individuals who perform hours of service for the Town of Westwood for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons.

- A. Departments should first attempt to utilize Town of Westwood employees to perform needed work and then recruit volunteers.
- B. Departments should **identify areas where volunteers might be utilized in advance** and identify the type of **skills** that volunteers will need to be useful in that area. Departments should then compile a list of possible volunteers.
 1. Departments may be contacted by individuals who want to volunteer but are not needed or do not possess the needed skills. Departments should predetermine how to communicate to these individuals that their offer to volunteer is appreciated but that the department cannot utilize their services.
- C. Departments may include as volunteers any individuals who volunteer to perform services for the department if the following **conditions** are met:
 1. The individual receives no compensation or is paid expenses or a nominal fee to perform the services for which the individual volunteered. The individual must perform services without any kind of promise or expectation or receipt of compensation for the services rendered.
 2. Such services are not the same type of services which the individual is employed to perform in the Town. Individuals may not volunteer to do what they are otherwise paid to do by the Town.
 3. The volunteer must sign a waiver and release prior to performing volunteer services.
 4. Contact Human Resources for Volunteer Agreement.

Section 7 Sending Ill Employees Home

Major recommended action: Managers and supervisors already have the responsibility and authority to send ill employees home.

Advanced Planning: Training of supervisors should include a reminder that they have the authority to send ill employees home and that sick leave is meant to cover such absence.

- A. If an employee who is staffing operations appears to have pandemic influenza symptoms at the workplace, supervisors have the authority to **require the employee to leave the workplace.**

As a **safety consideration**, management should look to the physical wellbeing of its employees and whether the health of fellow employees is endangered by the health of an ill employee. Such is the case where an employee is exhibiting symptoms of avian flu since ill employees may endanger the health of fellow employees.

Supervisors should first seek the approval of their manager or director prior to sending an employee home.

- B. Under the Civil Service Rules and collective bargaining agreements, employee may use sick leave for the employee's bona fide illness, incapacitating injury, or the employee's exposure to contagious diseases.
- C. In the event that employees are sent home because of pandemic influenza, employees may use their **sick leave accruals**, vacation accruals, compensatory time off accruals, or may request approval for an unpaid absence without leave if sick leave and vacation leave accruals are depleted.
- D. **Paid administrative leave is not available to an employee who is being sent home because s/he exhibit symptoms of influenza.**
- E. When the employee's condition improves to the point where the employee no longer poses a health hazard to fellow employees, the employee shall contact his or her supervisor and arrange for the employee's **return to work.** Employees will be required to provide medical documentation to the Human Resources Department to certify that they are fit for duty.
- F. **Pay** -Employees will not be paid for any time that they are absent from work without approved leave.

Section 7a Return to Work Authorization

Major recommended action: *Procedural.* During a pandemic influenza emergency, as a general rule, medical certifications for return to work will not be required if related to influenza. Employees may be required to return to different work sites and to different work duties.

Advanced Planning: Managerial and HR practitioner training.

In the event the Town Administrator and/or Board of Selectmen declares a pandemic influenza emergency, the following procedures will be in effect for the duration of the emergency.

Returning from Leave: In the event that an employee is ready to return to work from a leave (paid, unpaid, or military) the following procedures shall apply:

- A. The employee who is ready to return from leave shall **contact his/her supervisor** (or a person acting in his/her capacity) for instructions on when and where the employee should return for assignment, provided an assignment is available. Contact shall be made in the manner deemed appropriate by the department.
- B. The supervisor shall **inform the employee** as to whether or not the employee's return to work is authorized². If it is authorized, the employee should be informed of his/her work location. The supervisor must inform the employee if the work schedule, shift, and specific work assignments are different from the employee's regular assignment.
- C. After the emergency, the requirements for the employee to provide a Medical Release (Return to Work Verification form) from a health care professional will be restored.
- D. Town management has the right to contact and request documentation from employees who have not indicated readiness to return to work.

² See Section 7 for a discussion on sending ill employees home. Of note, if the employee returns to work and appears ill, the supervisor may send the employee back home.

Section 8 Family Medical Leave and Sick Leave

Major recommended action: Current policy and procedures apply.

Advanced Planning: Departments need to ensure that family medical leave administration is encompassed in the essential human resource management functions.

Town of Westwood employees may use medical leave pursuant to their current rights under:

- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Town of Westwood Family Medical Leave
- Civil Service Rights
- Collective Bargaining Agreements

During a pandemic influenza emergency, employees may need assistance to determine what leave applies to their situations. Please contact the Human Resources Department.

Section 9 Communication and Consistent Messaging

Major recommended action: This section sets forth useful reminders and suggestions on effective communication.

Advanced Planning: Departments not only need to identify key internal and external stakeholders but the methods that will be used to communicate with them. Departments, after direction from the Board of Selectmen, need to communicate to their employees.

One of the key elements in responding to any disaster, including a pandemic influenza emergency, is effective and timely communication. The Town of Westwood departments must plan their internal communication strategies before a crisis occurs. Sound and thoughtful communications will be required before, during, and after a pandemic influenza emergency. This section provides guidance on internal communications planning and strategies.

When communicating with their employees, departments should coordinate closely with their department's designated spokesperson and the Town Administrator and/or Board of Selectmen to ensure that Town wide messages align.

A. Core Communications Goals

- Provide clear, consistent, candid communications to employees, agencies, and the public.
- Apply this goal to communications at every level of organization – from the Selectmen's Office, throughout the departments, and to the public.

As departments contemplate and develop communications, they should adhere to these **guidelines:**

- There will be a great demand for accurate and timely information that will provide guidance and ease anxiety. There will be a need to build and maintain trust.
- Know your stakeholders, and develop a communications strategy for each one. Different types of information will need to be communicated to different audiences.
- Basic messages may change over the duration of the emergency. Departments will need to develop a phased communications plan that can be partially or fully implemented as needed.
- There may be a need to counteract the circulation of conflicting information, misinformation, and rumors.
- Communicate consistently and frequently. Even when there is no new information to share; it is good to allay fears.

B. In order to maintain business continuity and **to ensure efficient communications**, departments should:

1. Identify and communicate the department's critical functions and the employees who can perform the functions. Build depth through **cross training**. Keep in mind that absentee rates may top 25-30%, so build in the redundancy necessary to ensure that essential work will be performed.
2. Ensure that authority, such as hiring or purchasing, is delegated to appropriate employees and that such authority is fully communicated.
3. Update employee phone lists and make sure management has access to up-to-date data. Designate staff to ensure this updating is done on a regular basis.
4. Ask employees to update their emergency contact information on a regular basis, quarterly or more frequently if necessary. Designate staff to keep this information current.
5. Departments should clearly document all approved leaves and working-out-of-grade assignments during any declared pandemic.

C. When developing a communication plan, departments should identify their key **internal stakeholders and the methods used for communication**. For most departments, these stakeholders will include:

1. **Employees.** As detailed earlier in this section, departments must establish on-going and frequent communications with employees. Plan to implement two or more communication methods which may include an Internet web site, central telephone number with pre-recorded information, central telephone number staffed by informed communications personnel, email, or hard copy (print) materials.
2. **Department Management.** Departments must communicate business continuity issues and changes to policies and procedures. Again, plan to implement two or more communication methods to ensure messages are received.
3. **Town Management.** In addition to the "business as usual" communications required, departments may need to provide the Board of Selectmen's office or other agencies with a record of decisions made during a pandemic influenza emergency and other information such as employee absenteeism rates. Ensure that essential reporting is maintained. For example, departments should ensure that staff absenteeism is monitored and reported.

Section 10 Employee Assistance Program

Major recommended action: These resources and the processes for contact already exist.

Advanced Planning: Pre-pandemic briefing may need to occur in order that managers and supervisors are prepared to address the employee stresses that may arise during a crisis and to know when a referral to EAP should occur.

Should a pandemic influenza emergency occur, referral to the Town of Westwood Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may be recommended to address personal problems that interfere with work performance. In particular, a crisis such as a pandemic influenza may cause stresses that compromise the effective functioning of a work unit. Further, there may be a need for “Critical Stress Debriefing Sessions” to assist a work unit with particular problems or traumatic events.

A. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP is a service provided through Human Resources for all Town employees, regardless of benefits eligibility, career service, or temporary employment status. The program’s primary purpose is to assist employees and managers with personal problems that are interfering with work performance.

Employees and their immediate family members are encouraged to contact the EAP service any time they need help, referrals, or support. Sometimes employees contact EAP on their own, perhaps because they are facing a personal problem or crisis. Sometimes a supervisor encourages the employee to contact the Employee Assistance Program.

This is a confidential service at no cost to Town staff and members of their household. The toll free number staff can call to contact EAP is **(800) 451-1834**.

If you have questions related to employee assistance, please contact the Human Resources Department at **781-320-1028** or **781-326-2178**.