

ROYAL COLLEGE OF
DENTAL SURGEONS OF ONTARIO

PANDEMIC PLAN 2008



Royal College of
Dental Surgeons of Ontario

Ensuring Continued Trust

6 Crescent Road
Toronto, ON Canada M4W 1T1

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1.0 OUR ROLE IN A PANDEMIC	2
2.0 FRAMING THE RCDSO PLAN	4
3.0 RESPONDING TO AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC	6
4.0 ESSENTIAL SERVICE	11
5.0 INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES	12
6.0 POST-INFLUENZA PANDEMIC	14
APPENDIX	15

1.0

OUR ROLE IN A PANDEMIC

A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic in which a disease spreads easily and rapidly. A well-considered and comprehensive plan, aligned with the plans of other authoritative organizations, is critical to support RCDSO operations and employees during a pandemic period. All staff should be familiar with this plan and retain it for future reference.

The RCDSO Influenza Pandemic Plan has been developed with significant reference to other plans, including the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan, Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan, and the City of Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan. We have also borrowed liberally from the plan for the employees of the College of Nurses of Ontario and we are grateful to CNO for this support.

Our plan is an evergreen document and will be reviewed and updated at least annually, and/or as new information becomes available from the City of Toronto or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC).

The key factor in this plan is the ability of RCDSO to carry out its mandate and provide ongoing services and that depends on the phase and severity of the pandemic. Our operations, like many other organizations, will be affected during a pandemic. Our ability to fulfill our role depends on our human resource capacity during a pandemic and on many external factors that are beyond our control.

For this reason, the College has identified four primary roles that will guide decisions about operational functions and the importance of activities during a pandemic:

Regulatory — An influenza pandemic heightens the need for the delivery of safe health care. RCDSO will give priority to providing information about dental care during an influenza pandemic and participating in collaborative stakeholder decision-making related to pandemic planning and response.

Communication — The College recognizes that many members, the public and other stakeholders turn to us and other dental organizations to learn about topics and issues that affect dental practice.

We will continue to provide members with access to government and health information related to the pandemic via linkages on our website. In addition, we will provide information and advice about the regulatory expectations, standards and guidelines related to dental practice during an influenza pandemic.

Proactive and real-time consultation related to the application of the standards during an influenza pandemic will also be a high priority.

Corporate — We understand that our ability to continue operations depends on a number of factors, most of which are beyond our control. The preparedness plan outlines the corporate services, functions and activities that we will endeavour to maintain during a pandemic; however, depending on a multitude of external factors, it is realistic to assume that some or all this may not be possible.

Health System Support — The demand for health-care services will increase during an influenza pandemic. The College can play an important role supporting the health-care system by providing statistical information and supporting competency-based human resource planning.



FRAMING THE RCDSO PLAN

2.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Aligned** with the federal, provincial and municipal influenza pandemic plans and consistent with RCDSO's mandate and values. We will use the data and assumptions outlined in the provincial and municipal plans to guide our assumptions and plans.
- **Co-ordinated** with the plans of other regulatory bodies and dental organizations to support an interprofessional approach and response to an influenza pandemic.
- **Responsive** to RCDSO employees, members and the public in advance of a pandemic and seek to respond in a timely manner to requests for advice and information before and during a pandemic.

2.2 PLANNING GOALS

The objectives of the plan are as follows:

- facilitate readiness for an influenza pandemic;
- communicate our planned response to staff, Council, members and other stakeholders;
- maximize support to the provincial communication strategy;
- minimize essential service disruption;
- prepare and support RCDSO staff.

2.3 KEY ASSUMPTIONS

This plan is based on a number of assumptions made by various other planning authorities. If these assumptions change, the RCDSO plan will need to be revisited. As a

baseline, this plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its relevancy and accuracy.

Influenza Pandemic Assumptions

- It will simultaneously affect the City of Toronto and Province of Ontario with very little advance notice.
- Travel restrictions will be put in place.
- Large social gatherings may be restricted.
- If schools are closed, it will happen early in the pandemic.

Health Professional Regulation & Health-Care System Assumptions

- The *Regulated Health Professions Act* will remain in effect.
- Dentists will be a valuable resource during a pandemic.
- Health human resource planning will take place locally, although RCDSO may be asked to provide statistics by geographical location.
- There will be a competency-based approach to identifying needs and utilizing health human resource planning. This may result in an intensified need to collect, record and provide accurate and current membership data.

Assumptions About Members

- Dentists will want information and advice about RCDSO standards and guidelines.
- Dentists and others will turn to us to access relevant pandemic information and to seek advice as to how to interpret the information in relation to RCDSO standards and guidelines.

Assumptions About RCDSO Operations

- As many as 50% of the College staff may be affected by the pandemic and be unable to work due to illness or caregiving responsibilities.
- School closures and public transit interruptions may significantly affect the ability of staff members to come to work.
- Travel and group gathering restrictions will impact in-person Council, Committee and adjudicative panel meetings, and the ability to hold on-site meetings. The hearings schedule will be disrupted.
- Telecommunications and internet service will be available, but may be slower or have substantive service interruptions, potentially limiting College operations.

3.0

RESPONDING TO AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

3.1 LEADERSHIP

Council and Committees will continue their governance role to the extent possible, given the nature and scope of the influenza pandemic and the operational capability of the organization.

3.2 CO-OPERATION WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

As outlined in College policy passed by Council in November 2007, the College will give its full support to the provincial government, including the sharing of human resource data information to assist in the voluntary deployment of human resources.

This policy designates the Registrar as its primary contact to receive Important Health Notices and other critical information from MOHLTC; or in his absence, his designate, the President; or in his or her absence, their designate, the Communications Director.

Once a pandemic is imminent or has been declared by the Provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health, the College is represented at the daily video teleconference briefings with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Emergency Measures Unit and others by any or all of the following: the Registrar, the President, the Vice-President, and the Communications Director.

3.3 OPERATIONAL EMERGENCY TEAM

Depending on need and circumstances, the Registrar shall designate some members of College staff to form an Operational Emergency Team when the Provincial Medical Officer of Health declares that a pandemic in Ontario is imminent or even sooner, if deemed appropriate.

The Registrar will head the Operational Emergency Team. The Communications Director is a member of the Operational Emergency Team. The selection of the other members of the Operational Emergency Team will be guided by the following factors:

- proximity of staff to College offices;
- availability;
- understanding and knowledge of College's statutory obligations under the statute;
- the nature of the demands and services that the College is able to provide.

The Operational Emergency Team will be responsible for all operational decision-making, including internal and external activities and responses, related to the influenza pandemic.

Events that will trigger a discussion about restricting service and/or closing College offices include:

- staff safety
- extent and nature of staff absenteeism
- school closures
- transit interruptions
- power outages
- building security
- supply shortages

3.4 DAILY CYCLE OF EVENTS DURING PANDEMIC

- The Registrar and/or Communications Director will serve as media spokespersons.
- Operational Emergency Team members will be available for in-person meetings or daily conference calls at 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.
- The Registrar, as head of the Operational Emergency Team, will chair the meetings or conference calls.

8:30 a.m. daily

Registrar/Communications Director

- Video/audio conference with Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and Emergency Measures Unit.

10 a.m. daily

Operational Emergency Team

- Receive update report from Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
- Review new directions and RCDSO status including current rate of absenteeism.
- Communicate information to staff via phone and internet.

3 p.m. daily

Any Interested Parties

- Monitor public media conference held by Chief Medical Officer of Health and Emergency Measures Unit via public media outlets.

3:30 p.m. daily

Operational Emergency Team

- RCDSO status update and relevant decisions on communications, redeployment, etc.
- Communicate any updated information to staff.

All Staff

- Check voice mail/e-mail/phone messages.

3.5 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

College staff will be kept informed about an influenza pandemic in a variety of ways. The College's website already has a section devoted to pandemic planning with links to websites at the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Health Canada, and the World Health Organization.

The amount and type of information shared with staff will depend on which phase of the pandemic we are in. These phases are defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as follows:

WHO Pandemic Phases/Levels

Level 1	low risk
Level 2	substantial risk of human disease from animal virus
Level 3 Pandemic Alert	low risk of spread
Level 4 Pandemic Alert	spread localized
Level 5 Imminent	spread localized
Level 6 Declared	increased & sustained transmission in general population

Level 3/4—Pandemic Alert

- All staff attend an information session that outlines relevant information from the College's pandemic preparedness plan including:
 - basic information about an influenza pandemic;
 - self-preparedness;
 - College role during pandemic and role of Operational Emergency Team;
 - internal communication plans and expectations;
 - pandemic policy;
 - infection control practices.

Level 5—Imminent Pandemic

- Staff will be advised when the World Health Organization moves into a new pandemic phase. Staff will be reminded of the following:
 - self-preparedness;
 - role and responsibilities of Operational Emergency Team;
 - to remotely access College website/voice mail;
 - internal communication expectations;
 - pandemic policy;
 - infection control practices;
 - external information sources.

Level 6—Pandemic Period

The College will take direction from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care as to appropriate action.

3.6 MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Member communication is a priority both before and during an influenza pandemic. It is updated as required when new relevant information is released. The College has already acted proactively and for the past two years a portion of our website has featured an information portal to information about influenza pandemic and links to key government and international, national and municipal pandemic websites.

Level 3/4—Pandemic Alert

- An influenza pandemic fact sheet is developed and addresses:
 - College’s role and priorities during a pandemic;
 - building visitor guidelines/closure during a pandemic;
 - College’s expectations of dentists during a pandemic;
 - relevant College publications/standards, etc. available online;
 - key issues to consider during a pandemic;
 - other sources of information.
- A list of expected Q&As is developed to guide the College’s response to anticipated pandemic questions.
- Appropriate College staff review pandemic materials and are prepared to respond to member inquiries.
- The fact sheet and the Q&As are posted on the College website and, if timelines permit, are featured in *Dispatch* magazine.

Level 5/6—Imminent Pandemic/Pandemic Period

- College website provides status updates as directed by the Operational Emergency Team.



ESSENTIAL SERVICE

4.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

College operations will continue until such time that the influenza pandemic affects its ability to do so. Decisions about operations and essential services will depend on a number of factors:

- the epidemiology of the outbreak in Toronto where the College offices are located;
- the potential impact of repeated waves or occurrences of the influenza pandemic;
- interruptions in critical supplies;
- absenteeism of staff due to illness and caregiving responsibilities;
- building safety and security;
- the availability of telecommunications, and the availability and quality of the internet;
- direction from provincial and municipal governments and public health officials.

When staff resources are limited, the College will realign its operations to support the primary roles believed critical during an influenza pandemic.

5.0

INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES

5.1 WORKING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

Case Reporting

Influenza is a reportable and communicable disease. The College will participate in any febrile respiratory illness (FRI) surveillance reporting requirements or workplace absenteeism reporting requirements, as required by Toronto Public Health, and send the information to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Unit.

Vaccines and Antiviral Medication

Toronto Public Health will be responsible for distributing and coordinating vaccine and antiviral medication administration. Vaccine and antiviral supply may be limited and as a result may occur in stages, with six provincially designated priority groups receiving vaccine and antivirals sooner than others. This will not include College staff.

5.2 PERSONAL PROTECTION

Education and Training

College staff will be provided with an influenza pandemic information package that includes information on how to access up-to-date information about a pandemic in Ontario/Toronto.

Staff will also be asked to attend in-house information sessions that will address a number of topics to help prevent acquiring the flu or spreading it to others and key information from RCDSO's influenza pandemic preparedness plan.

When the training and education program for health-care providers is developed by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, staff will be given access to this information.

Annual Influenza Immunization

The College currently offers on-site annual flu vaccinations to staff. Staff will continue

to be encouraged to take advantage of the convenient opportunity to protect themselves, or to get a flu shot from their family doctor or community clinic.

While the annual flu shot will not protect staff from a pandemic flu virus, it will protect staff from getting ordinary flu, which might weaken their immune system or weaken their resistance to the pandemic flu.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The College will not be providing PPE for staff for several reasons:

- the provincial government has identified the use of personal protective equipment by individuals who are required to provide direct care for people with influenza;
- there will be a limited supply of PPE and health-care settings will be a priority;
- as the Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan notes, wearing masks by the public has not proven to be effective in limiting the spread of the virus.

5.3 ENHANCING INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES

Visitor Guidelines

To limit the spread of infection and allow for the redeployment of staff resources, the College may be closed to visitors and contracted agency staff during a Pandemic, if deemed appropriate.

If enacted, this visitor closure policy will be posted on our website, outlined in the pandemic fact sheet and posted on entrance doors. Only employed staff will be allowed into the building.

Environmental Cleaning

The influenza virus can live on hard, non-porous surfaces for 24-48 hours and from 8-12 hours on cloth/paper/tissue. For these reasons, the following practices may be introduced during a Pandemic, if deemed appropriate:

- Building maintenance staff will increase the frequency with which common surface areas are cleaned: elevator buttons, frequently used door handles, staircase railings, etc.
- Hand sanitation stations are already placed in common spaces throughout the College.
- Staff will be encouraged to use respiratory etiquette and effective hand washing as outlined by MOHLTC.
- The workspaces of staff who leave work or are absent due to a febrile respiratory illness will remain unoccupied for 48 hours and cleaned before staff return.



POST-INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

6.1 GENERAL

The post-influenza pandemic period occurs when Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Mayor of Toronto declare that the influenza pandemic has subsided and that the province and city have moved into the post-pandemic phase.

The College's Operational Emergency Team will determine when the organization has moved into a post-pandemic period, based on the severity of the pandemic and extent of its impact on College operations. When that happens, the Operational Emergency Team will disband.

6.2 EVALUATION

The College will evaluate the effectiveness of its pandemic preparedness plan including, but not limited to, the following components: appropriateness, timeliness, logistics, decision-making, and impact.

We are also committed to identifying the regulatory and operational issues that arise during the pandemic and will share this information and experience with others, as requested, to enhance future planning efforts.

Then, once the Influenza Pandemic Plan is evaluated and improvement opportunities identified, it will be revised where appropriate.

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PANDEMIC INFORMATION

City of Toronto

Toronto Public Health

www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/index.htm

Toronto Public Health—Emergency Planning & Preparedness Unit

www.toronto.ca/health/esu/index.htm

Government of Ontario

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

www.health.gov.on.ca/

Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic

www.mpssjus.gov.on.ca/

Telehealth Ontario

1-866-797-0000

TTY: 1-866-797-0007

Government of Canada

Public Health Agency of Canada

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html

Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cpip-pclcpi/index.html

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Information about Influenza Pandemics

www.pandemicflu.gov/

www.ready.gov— contains a number of preparation type brochures (pets, elderly)

World Health Organization

Pandemic Preparedness

www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/pandemic/en/index.html

Global Influenza Preparedness Plan

www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO_CDS_CSR_GIP_2005_5/en/index.html