

13 Vulnerable Population

There are individuals who would be considered more vulnerable during a pandemic. These individuals include: the elderly, those with chronic conditions, the homeless, those with disabilities, etc. They also include other groups with special needs such as:

- the working poor who would find it difficult to stay home from work when ill;
- single parents of young children who may find it hard to look after children and household responsibilities when they are ill;
- individuals with a hearing and/or vision impairment and those who are challenged either mentally or physically; and/or
- members of ethno-cultural groups who need infection control information and messages delivered in culturally appropriate ways.

The Peterborough County-City Health Unit, as part of the Peterborough Interagency Pandemic Influenza Planning Team (PIPIPT), which represents the City and County Emergency Control Groups and the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, offered an information session on pandemic influenza for representatives of vulnerable populations. The participants were asked to identify issues that the individuals they represent may experience during a pandemic. The following recommendations were made based on the information received. The PIPIPT will continue to collaborate with these organizations to find ways to offer support and assistance to vulnerable individuals.

The PCCHU recommends that organizations that represent vulnerable individuals:

- develop a business continuity plan which will include:
 - determining which services must be maintained and those that can be curtailed
 - identifying the skills required to meet the needs of the population served
 - identifying opportunities for redeployment of staff (including cross-training)
 - identifying strategies to augment staff (for example, using agencies, extending hours of work, calling staff back to work)
 - plan for possible labour, insurance and/or liability issues when redeploying or augmenting staff
 - plan for support for staff (child care, transportation, family responsibilities)
 - involve the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee and unions
- communicate the plan to all of their staff and the population they represent
- develop mechanisms to communicate with their clients during an emergency
- coordinate emergency and/or pandemic plans with other organizations as required
- develop mechanisms to share resources with other similar agencies
- advise clients about the need to prepare for a pandemic and to have a personal emergency kit available as indicated by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (See Personal Emergency Preparedness at:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/emu/emerg_prep/emerg_prep_mn.html)
- develop a written plan for a pandemic and review and update it annually

- identify opportunities to collaborate/share resources during a pandemic with other organizations
- maintain contact information and specific requirements for vulnerable individuals
- ensure that infection control measures are in place to minimize the spread of influenza in the workplace (Refer Chapter 10: Infection Prevention and Control)
- provide education to staff using approved fact sheets and notices provided by the PCCHU and the MOHLTC before and during a pandemic on minimizing their risks
- identify alternate suppliers for resources since traditional supply chains may be disrupted

The PCCHU will:

- identify key individuals or organizations to disseminate information to vulnerable individuals
- send media releases to organizations which represent vulnerable populations during a pandemic to ensure that these individuals are informed
- work with the MOHLTC to determine the process of providing assessment clinic services and vaccine to individuals without Ontario Health Cards
- ensure that information is available in various languages including sign language
- ensure that information is presented in a manner that is easy to understand
- provide community organizations with information to be disseminated to their clients
- work with organizations that represent vulnerable populations to address specific needs that may arise during a pandemic
- provide information in various formats (newspaper, posters, television, radio, telephone, presentations, etc.)
- work with county emergency control groups to help identify individuals who live in remote areas of Peterborough County and disseminate information
- encourage day cares to prepare business continuity plans to ensure that child care for individuals who must work during the day
- work with Social Services and other organizations that represent the vulnerable populations to address specific needs that may arise during a pandemic