

COVID-19 Pandemic Plan: Ojibway Nation of Saugeen, December 4, 2020

Introduction

A pandemic means an epidemic of any disease over a wide geographic area affecting a large proportion of the population. It is a serious public health concern; an influenza pandemic could cause a great deal of illness and death.

A pandemic would affect much more than just the health-care system. It is a crisis that will affect all aspects of society.

COVID-19 is a novel virus that has spread quickly across the globe, and is now in Canada. It spreads through droplets, such as those produced when coughing or sneezing, and through mucosal surfaces such as the eyes, nose and mouth.

In most patients, it produces a mild illness similar to a cold or a flu. The common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and headache. In a small amount of people it can create severe infections that may require people to have an oxygen mask or in some cases be on a life support machine. The patients at highest risk for severe infections are person over 60, and those with significant heart or lung problems. It is extremely important that we protect our elders throughout this pandemic, as they are most vulnerable to this. Despite the majority of young and healthy people having a minor infection they can spread COVID-19 to other people, including elders – so it is imperative that everyone take infection seriously.

The best methods of preventing the spread to and within the community are to limit unnecessary travel outside of the community, limits social gatherings, promote social distancing, and hygiene methods such as washing hands regularly, coughing/sneezing in an arm/tissue, cleaning common surfaces regularly, and wearing masks if any respiratory symptoms are present. Shaking hands is an important sign of respect and familiarity, but due to the risk of spreading the infection through direct contact we are asking people to refrain from hand contact.

Public Health measures, including proper personal hygiene such as frequent hand washing and cough etiquette, will help reduce the spread of a pandemic influenza virus.

Throughout this pandemic it is essential that we continue to view our community members as complete people. By being mindful everyone's Physical, Emotional, Mental and Spiritual health we can support them in all domains of wellness as work together over the coming weeks and months.

Leadership/Communication

Pandemic Team

- Chief and Headmen (Council) members
- Band Manager
- Health Director and CHR
- School Representative
- Community member

Communications

- The Health Director will be the primary contact person for any outside agency, or during any acute crisis that may arise.
- Daily meetings (in person or by phone) of the Pandemic Team should be attempted to ensure adequate communications amongst involved parties.
- There should be community representation on teleconferences with SLFNHA.

Responsibilities

- The Chief and Council are ultimately in charge of the implementation of this plan, but will require most tasks to be delegated to the health staff.

General Community Risk Mitigation

- School Closures
- Cancel or modify any community activity that puts people at risk for virus transmission.
 - Eg. Carnivals, community feasts
- Avoid any large gathering of people.
- Consider putting limitations on the number of people that can be in the Band Office/Health Centre at a time.
- Consider restrictions on people coming in and out of the community (at Chief and Council's discretion).
- All people coming into the community should be screened. When in full lockdown.
- Chief and Council with the Health Director to consider closing access to community, excluding medical emergencies, travel approved by Chief/Council.
- Daily sanitization, four (4) times a day, of communal surfaces such as door handles, phones, faucets, taps, toilets, clean waste access points (RO machine), desks, and counters in common buildings (band office, health centre and school).
 - Responsibility for this should fall on the staff for each facility, and they should report to their direct managers to confirm this is being done.
- Perform census of community members currently on reserve as well as those off reserve in other communities or nearby cities.
 - Chief and Council and Health Director to establish protocols as necessary for community members returning/seeking refuge during the pandemic.
 - Self Isolate for 14 days for all returning band members is recommended, but leadership may decide to restrict who can come back into community.
 - Screen all returning community member for active symptoms/exposures and test/quarantine any potential cases.

Health Promotion / Education

- Posters and signs should be posted around the health centre informing people of pandemic signs, symptoms, preventative measures, and changes in our community.
- Educational material should also be distributed to band office, school and each household.
- SLFNHA develops information documents to be distributed – contact them to get copies for distribution.

Maintaining Essential Services

Throughout the pandemic, it is important that routine services are still functional to support the well being and ongoing health of the community. Plans must be made to protect vital services and those trained to maintain / operate them.

Food Supply

- Collaboration with Fresh Market re: Orders/shipments of food in to the community.
- Encourage hunting and fishing – great outdoors activity, healthy food, and improves food sovereignty.
- Accounts were set up at Fresh Market in Sioux Lookout for families with children.

Wood/Oil heat

- Encourage most people to have a least a week's supply of wood/oil ahead of time.
- Support elders who need wood with deliveries to their homes.
- Establish a plan for wood/oil delivery to those in quarantine so that they reduce unnecessary interaction with others.

Gasoline

- No stores in the community.
- Encourage community members to have an adequate supply for emergencies.

Police

- Ensure a plan is in place for staffing in the event of illness.

Child & Family Services

- Communicate with main office over organization policy during pandemic about routine operations.

Band Council / Leadership

- Strong leadership is important to maintain order and pandemic support in the community.
- Health Director, Chief and Council to be well educated in infection control practices.
- Reduce unnecessary travel to other communities.

Community Mental Health / Wellness

Concerns

- School closures and decreased social activities put youth and young adults at risk for deteriorating Mental Health.
- Research has shown there to be a significant Mental Health risk for those in quarantine.
- At baseline there are many people in our region with high risk mental health concerns.

- Limited resources at the Health Centre and possible restriction of Mental Health workers further limits access to care.

Suggested Plan

- Increase the amount of outdoor activities that permit people to maintain safe distances of a least 2m, while allowing them to socialize and stay physically active.
- Encourage land based traditional activities like hunting, fishing and snow showing.
- Ensure universal hand washing and symptom monitoring for those participating in group outdoor activities.
- Community Mental Health worker/Health Staff to attempt phone call check ins with affected / isolated individuals to assess wellness, and engage with socially.
- CHR to maintain a list of high-risk mental health patients in the community, and to plan for regular phone calls to check-in with the patients.
- Encourage families to spend time together while in isolation.
 - Collect and share stories from parents, grandparents and other elders.
 - Use this time together to preserve knowledge for all future generations about First Nations history and culture.
- Distribute information about all available mental health resources.
 - Eg. Kids help Phone.

Community Health Programs

Health Centre

- Limit number of non-urgent visits to health centre.
- For anyone who has respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), they must call the Tele-Health to be screened over the phone. They should not enter the health centre unless directed by staff.
- If someone screens positive for pandemic risk factors and requires testing or further assessment they should not enter through the main entrance, but should be directed towards the rear entrance of the clinic where a pandemic assessment room will be set up.
 - CHR assessing possible pandemic cases should be in full personal protective equipment (PPE), and the room should be thoroughly cleaned after each person is seen.
- Anyone with respiratory symptoms who is entering the Health Centre, must wear a mask.
- Everyone entering the health centre must wash their hands prior to entering.
 - Hand washing station to be present at the front door, with appropriate signage.
 - Consider placing CHR there to enforce hand hygiene + mask wearing if symptomatic.
- If staffing allows, consider screening all staff and patients who enter the health centre with brief symptoms questionnaire and temperature.

Health Centre staff who do not have critical roles, or who are able to work from home may be asked to do so at the discretion of the Health Director.

- Daily cleaning, at least four (4) times per day, of commonly touched surfaces in the Health Centre.
- CHR should clean the chair/desk/ door after each patient.

Suboxone Program

- None in the community

Home Care

- No home care in the community.
- For high risk patients (those older than 60 or with significant health conditions), consider arranging deliveries of groceries, water, prescriptions, and wood
 - Prescription and groceries may need to be placed on an elevated surface to avoid dogs or other animals getting into them, the worker may also call ahead to the client can receive the package shortly after drop off.

Medical Driver

- Medical drivers should be educated in infection control techniques, and posters should be placed on the windows of the vehicle for passengers to read.
- It is recommended in each vehicle the driver has: masks, garbage bags, tissues, hand sanitizer, gloves, disinfectant wipes.
 - These should be provided by the Health Centre.
- Clean the vehicle twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon with disinfectant wipe, as well as after carrying any passenger with a cough or fever.
- Provide a mask to any patient with a cough or fever. Do not give masks to anyone else to preserve stock.
- Encourage all patients to cover their cough and sanitize hands when they get into the vehicle.

Pre-existing Medical Appointments

- Medical Doctor appointments may be rescheduled for most general follow-up purposes, these will be rebooked by the Medical Doctor on the basis of need and urgency.
- If necessary, some appointments may be performed by phone.
- Many diagnostic imaging and specialty appointments in urban centres will be cancelled. Patients, medical travel coordinator and nurses are to collaborate to determine which appointments will be kept.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Sanitization Products

- Health Centre should have sufficient cleaning chemicals and PPE for their operations, but community members who run short will be provided cleaning supplies upon request.
 - It is the CHR/Health Director's responsibility to request further stock from FNIHB for the Health Centre.
 -

Quarantine

- Patients who test positive or are suspected positive will require quarantine. Due to the high numbers of persons per household, and limited number of buildings this will be difficult
- Quarantine means strict isolation of the affected person from non-infected people
 - All efforts should be made to completely limit direct contact with others
 - Wood, water, food, household supplies and medications will need to be dropped off regularly to those in quarantine.
 - The CHR should be in regular contact by phone with each quarantined person to assess their health status, and whether they need to be seen by a doctor.
 - Ideally any infected person should stay away from the health centre.
 - Mental health / social wellness supports should be extended to quarantined individuals to ensure wellness.
- Sites for possible quarantine;
 - Contractor house – Lot 50/trailers are available – they have kitchens, showers, beds, plumbing and heating.
 - Community Leadership as well as the Health Director to agree on a location of quarantine facilities.

Deaths in the community

- There are limitations in our ability to hold, isolate, and transport bodies should an outbreak happen in the community that leads to the deaths of community members.
 - Communication between the Health Director, Medical Doctor and funeral homes will be necessary to respectfully and safely store and transport the deceased.
- The grieving process is necessary, though funerals and mass gatherings of people will increase the risk of further viral spread; alternative methods or a delayed memorial or ceremony may be recommended.

Goals for this plan

The pandemic plan for the Community provides a mechanism to guide appropriate decision-making and action.

The health and safety; of staff and community members will be closely monitored. If health and safety become a concern, our Pandemic Team may close specific sites.

The Pandemic Team is committed to working closely with community partners, SLFNHA and ISC during a pandemic and will rely on their expertise.

Pandemic Team

In the event of a pandemic being declared, a Pandemic Team will be formed. This Pandemic Team will consist of the members:

- Chief and Council
- Band Manager
- Health Director

- School Representative
- Community Health Representative
- Community Member

Roles of the Pandemic Team

1. The decision-making process to activate and deactivate the Plan;
2. To make decisions and direct the overall operations of the Team.
3. To liaise and co-operate with other organizations in response to the pandemic.
4. To determine the closure of the school, Health Centre, Band Office and the Road Accesses to the community.

Potential Impact in Community

1. Closing School – protocols to be initiated.
2. Activities cancelled and posted.
3. Limiting out going travel.
4. Limit incoming travel/visitors.
5. Potential lockdown of community.