

# Pandemic Planning 101

Ensure your institution is prepared for the impacts of a pandemic outbreak



## Pandemic Basics

The World Health Organization has outlined six phases of a pandemic. These phases are designed to be easily understood and based on observable phenomenon. "Phases 1-3 correlate with preparedness, including capacity development and response planning activities, while Phases 4-6 clearly signal the need for response and mitigation efforts."<sup>1</sup> As of this writing, the WHO has not identified the Coronavirus (COVID-19) as a pandemic.

### WHO Pandemic Phases

<b>Phase 1</b>	No viruses circulating among animals reported to cause human infection
<b>Phase 2</b>	An animal influenza virus circulating (among wild or domestic animals) has reportedly caused human infection.
<b>Phase 3</b>	A virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in humans, but not enough to cause human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community transmission. <i>(Limited human-to-human transmission may occur in circumstances such as an infected person and unprotected caregiver.)</i>
<b>Phase 4</b>	Verified human-to-human transmission of an influenza virus sufficient to sustain "community-level outbreaks". Phase 4 indicates a significant increased risk of pandemic, but does not mean imminent.
<b>Phase 5</b>	Human-to-human transmission into at least two countries in one WHO region. This stage indicates a pandemic is imminent and limited time is available for planning and preparation of mitigation strategies.
<b>Phase 6</b>	This is the official pandemic phase. Reaching this stage requires community level outbreaks in at least one different WHO region <i>in addition to</i> Phase 5 criteria. Reaching this phase is indicative of a global pandemic.

*A summary of the six phases of a pandemic as established by World Health Organization found at <https://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/phase/en/>*

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<sup>1</sup> Current Who Phase Of Pandemic Alert For Pandemic (h1n1) 2009  
<https://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/phase/en/>

## Scope of A Pandemic Outbreak

Given the nature of a pandemic, any planning efforts must account for a more chronic experience of adverse events – waves of intensity, peaking, and subsiding. The “CDC defines a pandemic as an extended event with multiple occurrences of outbreaks in the same geographic area, each outbreak lasting six to eight weeks.”<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that a pandemic will be wildly impactful. Being aware of just how much a pandemic may impact your institution is critical to ensure your preparedness is thorough and effective.

According to a CDC and OSHA estimate, “as much as 40 percent of a workforce could be affected by a pandemic and be absent from work due to illness, having to care for a sick family member, or having to care for children in the event of a school closure. In addition to absenteeism, organizations must contend with presenteeism – when a sick worker is physically present.”<sup>2</sup>

## Pandemic Planning Basics

Planning for a pandemic is different from a general continuity plan because pandemic plans must account for larger geographic impact. Additionally, the impact comes in waves and lasts for, potentially, months at a time, as opposed to a singular adverse event you are recovering from.

It is recommended that you create an annex within your existing plans to accommodate the necessary additional considerations regarding pandemics.

Differences to Consider:

- Increased absenteeism
- Social distancing procedures
- Impacts on interdependencies
- Any required policy exemptions
- Student quarantines
- Multiple supply chain disruptions that render normal backups unavailable

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<sup>2</sup> Bellow, D. (2010, January 1). Business continuity plans for pandemics. Retrieved from <https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/print/business-continuity-plans-for-pandemics-2>

## Building Your Pandemic Plan

Each institution is unique in needs, resources, and the extent of the potential impact. Use these suggested pandemic plan considerations to spur other pandemic planning needs that may be unique to your institution.

### Pandemic Plan Considerations

#### Essential functions

- Consider how you'll maintain these functions beyond 30 days, as well as any interdependencies that may be impacted.

#### Order of Succession

- Aim to have personnel 2 - 3 deep for each essential function.
- Evaluate cross-training for essential functions and proceed according to the determined need.
- Consider the impact increased absenteeism may have on the order of succession.

#### Continuity Facility

- Consider how logistical support services and facilities may be impacted by a pandemic.
- If social distancing is needed, working remotely may be a viable option. Do you have infrastructure to support this?
- Do you have procedures in place for this change? Do you need to create policy exceptions?

#### Continuity Communications and Resources

- Will your team need additional laptops, cell phones, or tablets?
- Is increased internet/WIFI bandwidth needed?
- Are telecommunications resources available for remote workers?
- Do you have provisions in place to provide secure access outside of the campus network to remote workers?

#### Essential Records Management

- Test, review, and update your essential records.
- Have a procedure in place to keep essential records up-to-date and prepared for any abrupt needs.

- Consider if you need your essential records to be accessible remotely for telecommuting workers or those working from an alternate site. Having these records organized and housed electronically in the cloud will ensure they are available from any internet-connected device.

## HR Communications

- Keep employees updated with relevant information, advisories, and guidance from health care officials.
- Be sure you have a plan in place to communicate with all faculty and staff about changes to campus functions.

## Student Communications

- Keep students updated with relevant information, advisories, and guidance from health care officials.
- Utilize different mediums/channels for communication to students.
- Start your communication early with basic health guidance like infection control and personal hygiene and then move to more specific, thorough information like social distancing and travel restrictions as the pandemic impact increases.
- Be sure to communicate community information and how to access community resources available to students.
- Remind your community to be kind and uphold your community values, not letting fear impact your interactions and communication with faculty, staff, students, and community members.

## Study Abroad Students

- Will you need to relocate or bring students home early?
- If a quarantine happens in a specific country do you have a plan in place to meet students' needs (food, toiletries, medication, etc.)?
- Do you have a communication plan to maintain contact with study abroad students in each location to provide the most up-to-date information?
- Are you prepared with a back-up plan if your original communication plan is impeded?

## Housing Plan

- Do you have a plan in place to support students in campus housing (hand sanitizer in lobbies, disinfectant wipes, etc.)?
- How will you handle social distancing within student housing?
- If the pandemic severely impacts your institution, do you have a plan to support infected students and non-infected students?

## Campus Health Center (if applicable)

- Does your campus health center have a continuity plan in place?
- Are they prepared to serve the campus population if the pandemic strongly impacts your institution?
- Is the staff trained and equipped to use proper protective equipment when treating infected patients?

## Research Impacts

- Consider how the pandemic will impact specific research projects?
- How will you maintain research projects if social distancing techniques are necessary?
- If travel restrictions are imposed, will you have the necessary supplies to last the duration of the restrictions?
- How will you handle waste disposal if travel restrictions or social distancing are required?

## Community Leader

- Will the institution provide resources to support community needs?
- Will the institution's campus be used as a support center for community initiatives?
- Do you need to communicate with community leaders to coordinate response efforts?
- Are community resources available and prepared to support students that may need to stay on campus or within the city?

## Training, Exercise, and Improvement

- Train your departments on their roles if the department pandemic plan is activated.
- Exercise your pandemic plan to ensure effectiveness and to identify any gaps that may be present.
- Improve your pandemic plan based on findings during your exercises.

## Devolution of Control

- How will you maintain essential functions if the pandemic makes leadership or essential staff incapable of completing essential functions?

## Supply Chain Impacts

- Consider if the pandemic will cause issues with obtaining essential supplies if cities or regions end up quarantined.
- Can some extra essential supplies be ordered in advance to create a 30 or 60 day emergency supply?
- Does your institution supply other institutions with materials that cannot be delivered in the event of a quarantine?
- Can your institution send extra supplies to those institutions that depend on them in advance of a potential quarantine?

- ❑ Note that if your institution is in position to already have its own supply chain issues mitigated in an emergency, this also helps the general community in that there are fewer people, companies, and schools contending for the remaining supplies during a shortage.

## Reopening

- ❑ Have a plan in place to work with public health authorities to safely reopen facilities and reestablish regular operations.

# In Conclusion

## Summary

Pandemics severely impact institutions and the people supporting them. The nature of pandemics requires unique planning for institutional continuity relative to a standard continuity plan. Institutions must prepare for waves of severe impact with intermittent periods of relief. Considerations include preparing for student communication, housing, research, community involvement, study abroad students, health center, faculty and staff communication, and more. Preparing and planning for a pandemic can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to. Take it one step at a time and utilize any resources at your disposal.

If you have questions about getting started or evaluating your pandemic plans or need support in building pandemic plans, higher ed continuity planning experts at Kuali are ready to help. Contact experts at [experience@kuali.co](mailto:experience@kuali.co) or learn more at [kuali.co](http://kuali.co).

## Resources

[CDC information specific to the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[CDC communication resources specific to the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[CDC Public Health Media Library](#)

[CDC Pandemic Influenza resources](#)

[CDC College and University Influenza Checklist](#)

[WHO Situational Reports on the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[WHO Public Health Emergency Dashboard](#)

[WHO Infographic resource](#)

[WHO Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) explanation video](#)

[WHO video - What can people do to protect themselves and others from getting the new coronavirus?](#)