

# *Catholic Mutual... "CARES"*

## **EPIDEMIC, PANDEMIC AND OUTBREAK PREPAREDNESS**

### **What is an Epidemic?**

An epidemic occurs when an infectious disease spreads rapidly to many people. For example, in 2003, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic took the lives of nearly 800 people worldwide.

### **What is a Pandemic?**

Pandemics include global disease outbreak – such as HIV/AIDS and influenza pandemics – such as Spanish Influenza, Asian Influenza and Hong Kong Influenza.

An Influenza Pandemic occurs when:

- A new subtype of virus arises. This means that humans have little to no immunity to it. Everyone is at risk.
- The virus spreads easily from person to person, such as through sneezing or coughing.
- The virus begins to cause serious illness worldwide. With past flu pandemics, the viruses reached all parts of the globe within six to nine months.

### **What is an Outbreak?**

A disease outbreak occurs when a disease occurs in greater numbers than expected in a community or region or during a season. An outbreak may occur in one community or even extend to several countries. It can last from days to years.

On January 30, 2020 the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an outbreak of a respiratory disease by a new coronavirus that has now been detected in 37 locations internationally, including cases in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated COVID-19).

## Monitoring of Epidemics, Pandemics, and Outbreaks

The WHO provides a pandemic alert system, with a scale ranging from Phase 1 (a low risk of flu pandemic) to Phase 6 (a full blown pandemic).

**Phase 1:** A virus in animals has caused no known infections in humans.

**Phase 2:** An animal flu virus has caused infection in humans.

**Phase 3:** Sporadic cases or small clusters of disease occur in humans. Human-to-human transmissions, if any, is sufficient to cause community level outbreaks.

**Phase 4:** The risk for pandemic is greatly increased but not certain.

**Phase 5:** Spread of disease between humans is occurring in more than one country of one WHO region.

**Phase 6:** Community level outbreaks are in at least one additional country in a different WHO region from Phase 5. A global pandemic is under way.

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Symptoms

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes (at this time) the symptoms of COVID-19 may appear as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. This information is based on what has been seen previously as the incubation period of MERS-CoV viruses. Reported illnesses range from mild symptoms to severe illness and death and include: fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

## How Coronavirus 2019 is Spread

Current understanding (February 2020) of how coronavirus 2019 is spread is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses.

Coronavirus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet).
- Via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes (this is why it is vital that anyone coughing or sneezing do so into tissue or their elbow). These droplets can land into the mouth, nose, or eyes of people who are nearby.

However, it may be possible that a person can get Coronavirus 19 by touching surfaces or objects that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

## **Preventing Coronavirus**

The CDC recommends everyday preventative actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses such as Coronavirus:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow vs. your hand (you can spread germs when touching items after coughing or sneezing into your hand).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow the CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
  - The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases including Coronavirus.
  - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of Coronavirus to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.
- Wash your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds before eating, blowing your nose, coughing, and sneezing. If soap and water is not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

## **What to Do if You Become Sick**

Seek emergency care right away if you have: trouble breathing, pain or pressure in your abdomen or chest, sudden dizziness, confusion, and severe vomiting.

## **Treatment for Coronavirus**

Currently (February 2020) there is no vaccine to prevent Coronavirus 2019. Clinical trials to treat Coronavirus are currently underway but there are no specific approved treatments by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

## **Pandemic Preparation**

A pandemic can cause economic and social disruption due to high rates of illness and worker absenteeism. This is especially true if absenteeism affects key services such as transportation, communication, or power.

Here are a few things you can do:

- Store a two week supply of water and food.
- Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply in your home.
- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medication, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- See if you can work from home in the event of a pandemic.
- Plan home learning activities if school is closed.

## **Interim Guidance for Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus 2019**

Interim guidance from the CDC is based on what is currently known about Coronavirus 2019. It is important to monitor the CDC website ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV)) as they update guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

Additionally, to prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described to determine risk of Coronavirus 2019. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin, and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection.

Recommended strategies for employers to use now include:

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:
  - Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are fever free (less than 100.4 F) for at least 24 hours without use of a fever reducing medication.

- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home and care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than usual.
- Separate sick employees:
  - The CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately.
- Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:
  - Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette and hand hygiene around the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
  - Provide tissues and no-touch trash cans for use by employees.
  - Instruct employees to clean their hands with alcohol based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Provide soap and water and alcohol based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning:
  - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
  - Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (i.e. doorknobs, keyboards, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

- Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:
  - Check the CDC's Travelers Health Notices <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which they will travel.
  - Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness before starting to travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
  - Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
  
- Additional measures in response to currently occurring sporadic importations of Coronavirus 19:
  - Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with Coronavirus 19 should notify their supervisor and refer to the CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
  - If an employee is confirmed to have Coronavirus 19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to Coronavirus 19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed Coronavirus 19 should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.

## **Planning Considerations for a Possible Coronavirus Outbreak:**

- Coordination with state and local health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operation resides. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.
  
- Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your Church services, ministries and office operations. Be prepared to change your mode of operation if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g. handling and counting collections, identify alternative volunteers for specific ministry needs, temporarily suspend various ministries and functions, (e.g. public and

private conferences, RCIA, Home Visitation, etc.) Follow all directives from the Bishop on celebration of the Mass and Sacraments. There may be a need to make some changes to how the Mass is celebrated. In the early stages, after a pandemic has been declared, you may have to make the following adjustments:

- Communion should not be distributed under the form of wine.
  - Communion on the tongue is strongly discouraged.
  - Collection baskets should not be passed.
  - Instead of shaking hands, bow to each other at the Sign of Peace.
- **If the pandemic progresses to a more serious stage**, you may need to make more changes:
    - Seating should be in alternate rows (as much as possible).
    - The “box” confessionals should no longer be used.
    - Holy Water fonts should be emptied; bottles of Holy Water should be made available.
    - There may need to be a limit on the number of attendees to baptisms, weddings, or funerals.
    - Large parish/school gatherings or events may have to be canceled.
    - Public school districts and communities will be reactive if the pandemic becomes more serious. Catholic Schools should follow what is being done by the public school districts.
  - Many parishes/schools may have pilgrimages or mission trips planned outside of the U.S. If there is evidence of a pandemic (i.e Coronavirus 19) outbreak in one of the countries being visited, it is recommended that the trip be postponed or canceled until the threat of the virus has subsided. Keep up-to-date on the travel guidance posted by the CDC at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

For more information on Coronavirus 19, you can call the CDC Hotline at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) or email questions to [cdcinfo@cd.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cd.gov).

Additional Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019>

<https://www.ready.gov/pandemic>

<https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/what-are-epidemics-pandemics-outbreaks#3>

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fguidance-business-response.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fguidance-business-response.html)