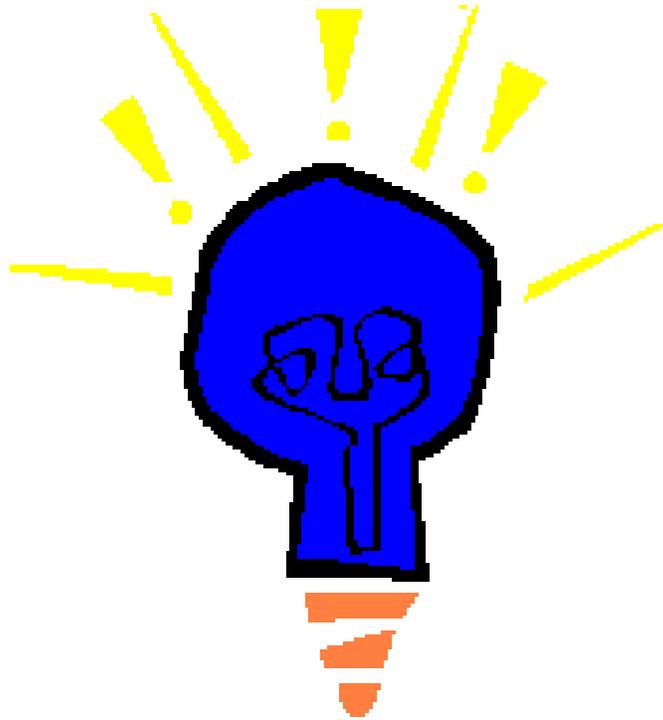


# **Pandemic Planning In Paine County**



## **Blue Light Specials Case Study**

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## **Introduction**

At the January 2001 Board of Health meeting the Paine County Health Officer, Mitsy Newgrad, presented her annual Health Department report. In attendance at the meeting were the seventeen members of the Board of Health, County Board Supervisors, staff from the Health Department, representatives of one of the local hospitals, and a reporter from the *Daily Herald*, the local newspaper.

Included in the Health Department's annual report was a description of the sequence of events and the community's response to a significant outbreak of influenza cases that occurred during the fall of 2000. Discussion following the report addressed the County's vulnerability to a pandemic, other emerging or re-emerging infectious diseases and/or to a bioterrorism event. Newgrad informed the Board that scientists currently believe the origin of the next pandemic will be in SE Asia and then spread worldwide. The incident of the avian influenza (H5N1) transmission to humans in 1997 and how the mass destruction of chicken flocks may have prevented a pandemic was cited as an example of a recent threat. Newgrad went on to explain that it is anticipated that we would have anywhere from 3 – 9 months to respond once a pandemic was suspected. However, Newgrad stressed this is not 100% certain. The pandemic could originate here, meaning we need to be prepared to act if a sentinel event is discovered. Last year's identification of a new strain, the A/Wisconsin/12/2000 (H1N2) and the experiences during the past influenza season were reality checks that showed the County was unprepared to respond to a large outbreak situation.

Newgrad also had introduced preliminary information about the pending new Model Emergency Health Powers Act and it's possible impact on disaster response. The Board concluded that the County was not prepared to deal with a pandemic or other large outbreak should it arise. The Board directed Newgrad to establish an executive steering committee to develop policies and procedures for a County Pandemic Influenza Control and Prevention Plan. The Board requested that final drafts of the policies, procedure and the Plan be completed and presented to the Board during the September 2001 meeting.

## **Case Body**

### **January 2001**

The next day Newgrad initiated a conference call that included Tab U. Lateit, one of the State Epidemiologists and R. U. Current, the State Immunization Program Director. They

suggested that Newgrad review the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) documents on Pandemic Planning. Based on the information she gathered, Newgrad established the following goals for the Executive Steering Committee:

1. Devise the overall structure and responsibilities for the command and control operations.
2. Oversee the planning, response, recovery and mitigation efforts.
3. Ensure that the County's Pandemic Plan is developed, reviewed and periodically revised.

In addition to developing the goals, Newgrad identified and issued a letter of invitation to key community partners and stakeholders to become a part of the Influenza Pandemic Executive Steering Committee. The list included representatives from:

Local hospitals and clinics	Paine County Medical Society
Local Pharmacists	Local Veterinarian
Police Department	Fire Department
Nursing Homes	Emergency Government
Mortician	Coroner

***Daily Herald Headline - January 10, 2001 "County Not Prepared for Next Flu Epidemic!"***

When Newgrad arrived at the meeting and entered the meeting room, she observed that only a small number of people were there to attend the first committee meeting. Newgrad opened the meeting with introductions. She was surprised to discover the number of people/groups invited that did not attend or send a representative. The most notable absence was that of the St Jude's Hospital Administrator, Joseph Bottomline or his Chief of Medical Staff, Dr William Harvard. Also missing were the Fire Chief, Kenya Burnum, and a representative for the local veterinarians. Les Factual, a reporter for the *Daily Herald*, was present and asked to observe the meeting, Newgrad consented. Copies of the goals for the Steering Committee were handed out and explained. She then opened the meeting to questions. A heated debate quickly developed. Some of the questions and issues raised by those in attendance included:

1. Lack of representatives from key agencies – several additional partners were identified that should be at the table.
2. No common ground – some people did not know why they were invited and did not feel they were needed especially since their input was not solicited before the goals were set.

3. Turf issues/power struggle/conflict – who would be responsible for what especially when competing groups are involved. Several people voiced comments that their agency should have control over the planning process not the Health Department.
4. Funding issues – where was the funding going to come from for this plan.
5. Lack of understanding of legal ramifications - especially the pending Emergency Health Powers Act – many voiced concerns over what would be covered by this pending legislation.

The meeting quickly deteriorated, people became angry and argumentative. Newgrad invited the group to meet again the following week and identified other partners that would be recruited to send a representative. The agenda for the next meeting would include having speakers discuss some of the issues the committee had identified.

***Daily Herald Headline – January 24, 2001 “Committee Members Are Fighting Not Planning.”***

The next week Newgrad made telephone calls to recruit additional organizations and to those people who had been invited but did not attend the meeting. When she contacted Joseph Bottomline, Administrator at St Jude’s Hospital, to inquire about the lack of representation from the hospital. Bottomline told Newgrad that he did not see a need for them to attend the meeting and stated that they did not wish to be involved especially if Fredrick Harumph, the Administrator of Peaceful Valley and owner of the Cheap Paper Company and the *Daily Herald* Newspaper was involved. Bottomline told Newgrad that the *Daily Herald* had recently published articles questioning the quality of care being given at St Jude’s Hospital. Newgrad discussed how the pandemic would affect the community and how this would impact the hospital and its ability to respond. Newgrad stressed that the hospital would be needed in critical areas of the response plan and that a representative was needed from the hospital. Newgrad explained to Bottomline why it was also important for Harumph to be present at the planning sessions as the major employer in the County and as the owner of the local paper.

Newgrad also contacted Just S. Forall, a lawyer from Dewey, Screwum, and Howe a local legal firm and asked if he could come to the next planning meeting to give the committee a brief overview of the new Emergency Health Powers Act and its possible impact on individual rights. Forall agreed to come, but stressed that he could only explain what the anticipated legislation might include. Newgrad told him this would be helpful information for the Steering Committee.

## **February 2001**

The second Steering Committee meeting had much better representation from local government and organizations. Newgrad began the meeting again with introductions and then introduced R. U. Current, the State Immunization Program Director, who gave the group an overview of Influenza, pandemics and pandemic planning. Newgrad reviewed recent events and trends related to influenza for Paine County and the surrounding area and the fact that there was no policies or plan in place to deal with a pandemic or other outbreak. Newgrad then introduced Just S Forall who gave an overview of the Emergency Health Powers Act and its possible impact for policy development. The next meeting and agenda were set.

### ***Daily Herald Headline – February 1, 2001 - “Proposed New Law Gives Health Department Legal Power to Force People to be Treated or Locked Up!”***

After the paper came out, the Health Department and County officials were bombarded with telephone calls. Over the next few days many editorials were published in the paper expressing the opinions and outrage of community members and groups. The predominant concern voiced was that the Health Department would be overstepping its bounds and infringe on the rights of individuals by forcing them to receive treatment that was against their beliefs or that they would be locked up in quarantine if they refused to cooperate. When Newgrad arrived at the next meeting she discovered that the group waiting for her was very different than the group that had been invited. In addition, there were more members of the media, human rights advocates, religious groups and members of the general public. Everyone demanded to have his or her issue heard. Newgrad explained that the committee did not fall under the open meeting laws but she moved that the agenda for this meeting be tabled and that the meeting become a listening session to identify the issues. The members agreed and the people were invited in to share their issues. Newgrad established some ground rules and time limits for comments. A staff person was sent to get a flip chart and was appointed to be a recorder for the session. A listing of the issues was obtained as well as a list of people interested in participating in subcommittees in the future. A next meeting was established for the following week.

### ***Daily Herald Headline – February 14, 2001 – “Community Protests Disrupts Committee Meeting”***

The following week the Executive Steering Committee met again. At this meeting the media and additional County residents were present and again issues were raised.

Members of the committee verbalized frustration that the agendas were not followed and that at the current rate, the plan would not be developed. Newgrad proposed that the meetings from this point until the draft was ready to be presented to the Board be held in closed session. The group with the exception of Fredrick Harumph voted in favor of this proposal. The next meeting date was set for March 12,2001.

***Daily Herald Headline – February 28, 2001 – “Pandemic Group to Plan in Secret”***

**March 2001**

Newgrad and many of the members of the Steering Committee and the County Board received telephone calls following the media reports that the meetings would be closed to the public. Newgrad contacted Polly Tischen, the County Executive, who recommended that the committee establish a media liaison to keep the media and other interest parties abreast of the work the committee was doing.

At the beginning of the next meeting Newgrad had all of the members introduce themselves and identify what agency they represented and give a brief overview of how a pandemic would affect their organization. Members were then encouraged to verbalize their agency's needs, wants, and own agendas that they hoped to achieve as a result of being part of this committee. A staff person recorded all of these on large Post-it® paper. After the issues were recorded Newgrad had the group categorize and group the common issues. Newgrad then tabled the pandemic discussions and walked the group through a series of team building exercises. A committee member was appointed to be the point person for media contact and press releases. A meeting schedule was established with a target date of August 2001 as the deadline for completion of the final draft of the plan.

***Daily Herald Headline – March 14, 2001 – “Health Officer Bars Press - Appoints Committee Member as Media Liaison”***

The next meeting of the Steering committee focused again on team building exercises. After the exercises they went back to the lists and worked to develop a vision and mission statement for the Steering Committee. By the end of the meeting the group adopted vision and mission statements and accepted the goals established for the Steering Committee by Newgrad.

***Daily Herald Headline – March 28, 2001 – “Pandemic Committee Will Have Plan Ready For Next Flu Season”***

**April 2001**

The Committee met several times to review and discuss documents, resources and existing emergency plans. Guest speakers were brought in by Newgrad to address various issues as they arose. By the end of April the Steering Committee decided to adopt the WHO framework for the Influenza Pandemic Plan development.

***Daily Herald Headline - May 1, 2001 – “1.2 Million Birds Killed to Combat Hong Kong's Avian Flu. Could Paine County Be Next?”***

**May & June 2001**

Based on the WHO framework for planning the steering committee established subcommittees to work on different portions of the plan. Additional community members were invited to participate on some of these subcommittees. Newgrad established public information meetings and listening sessions to keep the community engaged and informed of the progress of the plan.

**July 2001**

The steering Committee and subcommittees met as a whole to review the first draft of the plan on July 10, 2001. Newgrad asked members to review the plan’s feasibility and to identify any gaps. Newgrad asked one of the members to record comments on the large Post-It® paper. When all of the issues were identified, the committee discussed each issue and made a determination as to which subcommittee would be most appropriate to address the issue. The subcommittees were charged with the task of evaluating and dealing with each item. The subcommittees were given one month to complete their revisions for the final draft.

***Daily Herald Headline – July 24, 2001 – “Flaws in Plan Send Pandemic Committee Back to the Drawing Board”***

**August 2001**

On August 21, 2001 the steering committee reviewed the final draft of the plan. The Committee adopted the final drafts and plans were discussed about presenting the final plan to the Board of Health. Newgrad and Bottomline volunteered to do the presentation to the Board. Newgrad stated that the presentation was already identified as an agenda item for the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

***Daily Herald Headline – August 22, 2001 – “Controversial Pandemic Plan to be Unveiled to the County Board in September.”***

**September 2001**

Newgrad, on behalf of the Steering Committee, presented the completed Draft Plan on September 11, 2001. In addition to the Plan, Newgrad also presented recommendations for further testing of the plan to the County Board of Health and the County Supervisors. The County Board of Health accepted the Pandemic Plan draft. Polly Tischen, the County Executive, stated she would meet with Dee Sazter, from the Emergency Government Office to arrange for joint training and practice sessions.

***Daily Herald Headline – September 12, 2001 – “Pandemic Planning Group Presents Plan to Local Officials – Practice Test of the Plan Identified as a Key Next Step”***

**October 2001**

Newgrad hosted a celebration party for committee members at a local restaurant in mid-October. She also submitted the names of committee members and the organizations they represented to the *Daily Herald*, the local paper to offer public recognition of the members’ work on the committee.

***Daily Herald Headline – October 4, 2001 “Planning Group Recognized for Work on County’s Pandemic Plan”***

**Closing**

Between January 2001 and September 2001 the Executive Steering Committee under the leadership of Mitsy Newgrad had accomplished the following:

1. Reviewed existing emergency plans to assure they included an emergency medical response team and that any unusual health event would initiate the activation of the emergency response team.
2. Established a command structure that included alternates in the event that a pandemic is identified. Included were definitions of roles and assigning responsibilities for essential functions to the appropriate person/agency for each of the WHO Pandemic Phases.
3. Established a decision tree and timelines to facilitate the quick prioritization and distribution of equipment, personnel and services.
4. Established mutual aid guidelines and agreements with surrounding communities.

5. Developed a marketing strategy to keep the community, officials and legislators informed of the needs and gaps in infrastructure and resources.

The Paine County Health Officer, Mitsy Newgrad presented a draft of the Paine County Pandemic Influenza Control and Prevention Plan to the Board of Health on September 12, 2001.

Newgrad identified the following issues/barriers that would potentially impact the adoption of the final plan:

- Recent World events – 9/11, anthrax scares, vaccine shortages
- Pending legislation on the Emergency Health Powers Act
- Funding issues
- Integration issues with State and Federal Plans
- Objections from various community groups
- Need to establish a community-wide “practice” session

## **Teachers Guide**

1. What core public health concept is the focus of this case study?
2. What aspects of this core public health concept are present?
3. What Essential Services can you identify in the Case Study?
4. What organizational practices were needed or identified?
5. What leadership practices were evident? Cite examples from the case study that illustrate the practice.
6. What might have made the process go smoother?
7. List barriers that affected the process?
8. What elements of Public Health Infrastructure were missing throughout the process?
9. What improvements in Public Health Infrastructure were made as a result of the process?

# Teachers Guide - Answer Key

1. What core public health concept is the focus of this case study?  
Policy Development
2. What aspects of this core public health concept are present?  
Health Planning                      Setting Regulations, Standards, Health Objectives  
Policy Analysis                      Disaster and Emergency Public Health Procedures
3. What Essential Services can you identify in the Case Study?  
Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems  
Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts
4. What organizational practices were needed or identified?  
Advocate for public health                      Building coalitions  
Developing Community Resources
5. What leadership practices were evident? Cite examples from the case study that illustrate the practice.  
Visioning                      Enabling Others to Act  
Encouraging the Heart
6. What might have made the process go smoother?  
Do an actual tabletop exercise. By actually going through a dry run, a lot of good information (positive & negative) would be obtained
7. List barriers that affected the process.  
Lack of skills/experience                      Personality/Role Conflicts  
Lack of common language
8. What elements of Public Health Infrastructure were missing in the process?  
Poor information and data systems, poor communication between agencies, public and media,  
Poor organizational capacity (local, State, Federal and Private), Workforce capacity and competence
9. What improvements in Public Health Infrastructure were made as a result of the process?  
Organizational capacity increased at the Health Department  
Information and data system needs and resources were identified  
Workforce capacity and competency assessment was recognized as a vital need.