

EPIDEMIC / PANDEMIC POLICY

Organisational Area

Registered Training Organisation
Community Programs

Authorisation

This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Committee of Governance of the North Ringwood Community House Incorporated on 16th March 2020.

Review date

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required.

Scope

This policy applies to all NRCHI Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and Patrons (this includes students, class participants and members of the general public accessing NRCHI).

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, infectious diseases mean diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another. This policy is focused on infectious diseases that are declared to be an epidemic or pandemic.

Pandemic: (of a disease) existing in almost all of an area or in almost all of a group of people, animals, or plants <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pandemic> Accessed 16/3/2020

Epidemic: the appearance of a particular disease in a large number of people at the same time <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/epidemic> Accessed 16/3/2020

Introduction

From time to time infectious diseases (see Definitions) develop into epidemics (see Definitions) or pandemics (see Definitions), and create increased risks for the community.

- 1.1 NRCHI wishes to protect its staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons from infection or contagion by epidemics and/or pandemics.
- 1.2 NRCHI will facilitate, through its policies and procedures, strategies designed to reduce risks to its staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons.
- 1.3 NRCHI will comply with all directions from relevant government authorities (The Department of Health and Human Services, The Department of Education, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria), and NRCHI's occupational health and safety obligations in relation to the epidemic or pandemic.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the strategies and actions that NRCHI intends to take to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases that are categorised as epidemics or pandemics, and control the transmission of infectious diseases if or when cases are identified.

Policy

In the event of an epidemic or pandemic, NRCHI will:

- Assist its staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons to minimise their exposure to the illness concerned
- Encourage and assist (as directed by health authorities) those who have reason to believe that they are at risk of contracting the infection to obtain a diagnosis
- Support staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons to take reasonable precautions to prevent infection or contagion
- Monitor and maintain its services and operations throughout the period of concern

In the event of an infectious disease being declared an epidemic or pandemic, NRCHI requires people covered by this Policy to take the following precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean their hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water
- Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between themselves and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth
- Refrain from hand to hand contact such as shaking hands, high fives etc
- Make sure they follow good hygiene, and encourage others to do the same. This means covering their mouth and nose with their bent elbow or tissue when they cough or sneeze, disposing of used tissues immediately and washing hands after using tissues
- For staff, volunteers and contractors, stay home if feeling unwell. If feeling well enough to work but would like to minimise the risk of infecting others, ask the CEO whether they can temporarily work from home (applicable only to certain positions)
- If a patron stays home due to feeling unwell, contact NRCHI to inform them of their absence
- Keep up to date on the latest hotspots (cities or local areas where the pandemic or epidemic is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places - especially if they are more at risk
- If they are, or are likely to be contagious, notify the CEO as soon as possible. It may be necessary for them to self-isolate by staying at home until they obtain a doctor's certificate stating they have recovered
- Seek medical advice promptly and follow the directions of their local health authority
- If tested and found to test positive to an infectious disease, contact the CEO immediately

Sourced from <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/> accessed 16/3/2020.

Responsibilities

The CEO and/or Committee of Governance are responsible for assessing the organisation's vulnerabilities, in the light of an epidemic or pandemic, to:

- NRCHI's own human resources
- NRCHI's ability to continue to run courses and activities
- NRCHI's ability to remain open to the public

In the event of an epidemic or pandemic to:

- Inform staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons likely to be affected by an epidemic or pandemic of NRCHI procedures
- Bring into operation the epidemic or pandemic management procedures specified below
- Institute any administrative measures necessary to reduce the impact of the vulnerabilities detailed above

Employees/volunteers are responsible for:

- Abiding by the epidemic or pandemic procedures specified below
- Following all directives given by the CEO

Procedures

The following procedures apply in the event of the CEO informs staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons (via face to face contact, staff announcements to patrons and social media platforms) that epidemic or pandemic procedures are in effect.

Events and Classes

On the advice of relevant government authorities, the CEO will consider on a daily basis whether any events involving the attendance of staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons should be changed, rescheduled or cancelled to minimise the risk of infection. Should events or classes be cancelled, the CEO will determine if staff can continue to work onsite at NRCHI, work remotely or are required to take leave.

NRCHI Closure

On the advice of relevant government authorities, the CEO will consult with the COG Chairperson, to confirm directives that NRCHI must close. Based on the role that they assume within the organisation, the CEO may instruct members of staff to work from home for a period of time. If it is not feasible or appropriate for staff to work from home they may be entitled to be paid while NRCHI is closed. This will be reviewed by the CEO weekly as further information comes to hand.

Work Procedures

On the advice of relevant government authorities the CEO will consider on a daily basis whether:

- it is necessary or appropriate for nominated staff to work from home.
- staff/volunteer attendance at events, (or other activities that may cause them to come into contact with other people in Australia or overseas) should be modified or cancelled.
- arrangements for staff/volunteers who have contact with patrons should be modified to minimise risks for all parties.

If an employee, (with no medical reason) chooses to stay home as a precaution, they must apply in writing to the CEO, stipulating how long they are choosing to be absent for. The CEO, in consultation with the COG Chairperson, will review the application and provide an outcome to the employee within 2 days of the application being received. The employee may be entitled to take a period of leave, such as annual leave, long service leave or leave without pay, but will not be able to access their personal leave.

If an employee cannot come to work because they are sick with the infection they are entitled to take paid personal leave (sick leave).

If a member of their household is infected the employee is entitled to take paid personal leave (carer's leave).

If an employee is required to be quarantined or to self-isolate they can work from home or take any leave (for the period of time specified by the Department of Health and Human Services). A copy of a doctor's certificate or statutory declaration is required to justify their absence.

The CEO will require any member of staff who has tested positive for any infectious disease linked with an epidemic or pandemic to provide a doctor's certificate stating that they are fit to return to work onsite at NRCHI.

The CEO will consider on a daily basis whether arrangements with existing casual trainers and facilitators need to be cancelled, modified or supplemented.

Health Messaging

The CEO will remain up to date with current directives from relevant government authorities by regularly checking DHHS website and reading circular emails from key stakeholders.

The CEO will regularly consult with like-minded organisations to ascertain their workforce responses.

The CEO will consult with COG members as required.

The CEO shall familiarise staff, volunteers, contractors and patrons, as relevant, with recommended procedures on epidemic or pandemic avoidance guidelines (e.g. handwashing, soap, sneezing, social distancing) as appropriate.

Related Documents

- Refund Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Incident Report
- Risk Management Policy
- Risk Management Plan
- First Aid Policy

Legislation & Industrial Instruments

This policy & procedure is not intended to override any industrial instrument, contract, award or legislation.



- *Biosecurity Act 2015 (Commonwealth)*
- *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
- *Fair Work Regulations 2009 (Cth)*
- *Neighbourhood Houses and Adult Community Education Centres Collective Agreement 2016*

Document Locations

NRCHI Website

Electronic file folders accessible by NRCHI Administration staff