



Pandemic Flu Plan

October 2009

**BLAIR SENIOR SERVICES, INC.
PANDEMIC FLU PLAN
SEPTEMBER 2009**

I. Introduction

The emergence of a possible human influenza virus pandemic presents a formidable preparedness and response challenge for Blair Senior Services, Inc. (BSS), the aging services network and the community as a whole. During the annual fall and winter influenza season, older individuals and persons with chronic illnesses are always at greater risk. However, the potential impact is magnified when caregivers and service providers become sick or unable to provide oversight and assistance with daily living activities.

The BSS operational influenza pandemic response will focus on protecting employee health and safety, while limiting the negative impact on its consumers during an influenza outbreak. Throughout its planning effort, BSS recognizes effective containment and response to a flu crisis will require a comprehensive and coordinated plan for preparing and mobilizing its employees, business partners and resources of the aging services network. Successful outcomes of this plan will require effective command, control, flexibility and communication in an unpredictable environment.

BSS acknowledges the time and effort of its Pandemic Planning Committee and that of department staff who, over a two-month period, participated in a series of preparedness and response planning sessions. Without their insight and participation, this plan would not have been possible.

The BSS influenza pandemic plan includes the following strategies:

- **Prevention and Containment:** Active BSS engagement in any and all proactive measures to minimize the negative effects of this crisis on employees, consumers, volunteers and the aging services network.
- **Programmatic Impact:** Internal review and analysis by department to identify key functions and critical inputs required to maintain respective operations. Develop contingency plans for employee absenteeism, alternative suppliers, emergency communication, and operational triggers that would impact respective service delivery.
- **Business Partners:** Establish and maintain communication within the aging services network regarding all facets of pandemic planning.
- **BSS Operations:** Sustaining a business environment during unstable environment, focusing on effective assessment of conditions while producing prudent and well communicated direction to employees, consumers and business partners.
- **BSS Human Resources:** Assessing impact of extraordinary absenteeism within established compensation and leave policies. Acute level of awareness regarding employee fear and anxiety directly related to a community health crisis.

- **BSS Communication:** Given the anticipated media saturation of H1N1 coverage, BSS will focus on fundamental messages of prevention, containment, and vaccination availability. As the need arises, BSS will provide open and timely announcements regarding operational status to employees, consumers and the community.

II. BSS Planning Assumptions (based on guiding principle from the Department of Health & Human Services, USA)

- The virus will have the capacity to spread rapidly. Among BSS personnel and aging services network providers, an average of 20% will become ill during a community outbreak.
- The pandemic will be active for several months. In a severe pandemic, absenteeism attributable to illness, the need to care for ill family members and fear of infection may reach 40% during the peak weeks of a community outbreak, with lower rates of absenteeism during the weeks before and after the peak.
- Multiple waves of illness could occur, with each wave lasting 2-3 months. Historically, the largest waves have occurred in the fall and winter, but the seasonality of a pandemic cannot be predicted with certainty.
- People may be asymptomatic while infectious.
- The pandemic will generate enormous demands on the healthcare system. Of those who become ill with influenza, 50% will seek outpatient medical care.
- There will be delays and shortages in the availability of vaccines and antiviral drugs.
- The pandemic will create significant disruption of Commonwealth and community infrastructures, including transportation, sanitation, commerce, utilities and public safety, due to widespread illness among workers and their families, and concern about ongoing exposure to the virus.
- Containment of the outbreak may require a portion of the BSS workforce to operate from a de-centralized structure.
- Infected network staff will be unable to provide life sustaining and daily living services. There will also be network staff reductions caused by fear-based absenteeism.
- Substantial numbers of caregivers will become ill, further increasing the severe strain on community-based services.
- A lack of nursing home diversion services will result in the immediate need for clinical or institutional care.

III. BSS Planning and Preparedness for Influenza Season

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the severity of illness that the 2009 H1N1 influenza will cause or the amount of illness that will occur during the 2009-2010 flu season cannot be predicted with a high degree of certainty. BSS' planning is two-fold; without jeopardizing the health and well being of employees and consumers - maintain normal operations despite encountered difficulties, and secondly, recognizing that decisive and immediate action will be necessary if a serious influenza outbreak occurs.

BSS has considered and will communicate a variety of objectives when determining how best to lower the impact of influenza on its employees and consumers.

a. Prevention and Containment

- Reducing transmission among and between employees and consumers will be an overriding priority.
- BSS will continue to maximize opportunities to reinforce wellness issues for employees, consumers, volunteers and service providers through flyers, posters, newsletter features, bulletin boards, in-services, and e-mails. To date, all of the aforementioned channels have been utilized to convey reinforcement and education for prevention and containment.
- BSS will continue efforts to encourage and coordinate flu vaccination for older persons while offering employee participation at no cost. Annual vaccinations will occur at BSS locations on October 6-8, 2009.
- **Hand Washing: All persons are asked to wash their hands frequently. Proper hand washing procedures are: 1. Run hands under warm water and apply soap. 2. Rub the front and back of hands and in between fingers for 15-20 seconds. 3. Rinse hands thoroughly and dry with a paper towel. 4. If hand washing is not possible, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**
- **All persons are asked to cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your upper sleeve, not your hand, whenever you cough or sneeze.**
- BSS will make available cleaning and sanitation supplies for employee use within their office and in the course of their travels. Staff should avoid sharing computers, telephones and supplies in the workplace. Disinfecting surfaces touched by multiple people will be a shared responsibility, based on usage, to ensure immediate action is taken.
- All sick persons should stay at home and away from the workplace, a senior center or volunteer assignments. CDC recommends that persons with influenza-like symptoms, such as a fever (100 degrees or higher), remain at home until at least 24 hours after their fever has resolved.

- As severity of the pandemic progresses, BSS will both implement and react to social distances measures to reduce the spread of the disease. Examples include: suspension of business meetings and travel, adult/child day care programs, senior centers, schools, and home visits.

b. Programmatic Impact

- Internal review and analysis by BSS departments has been undertaken to identify key functions and critical inputs required to maintain respective operations. Whether a core program or core functions (such as payroll), all facets of BSS operations were evaluated in regards to back-up support, alternative suppliers, and emergency communications both internally and externally. A listing of core areas is as follows:
 - Adult Daily Living Centers
 - APPRISE & Regional APPRISE
 - Attendant Care
 - Care Management
 - Community Transportation
 - Domiciliary Care
 - Family Caregiver Support Programs
 - Guardianship/POA
 - Home Delivered Meals
 - Housing Assistance Programs
 - In-Home Services
 - Information & Assistance
 - Legal Assistance
 - Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP)
 - Medical Equipment & Supplies – Environmental Modifications
 - Nursing Home Transition
 - Ombudsman
 - PDA Waiver Program
 - Pre Admission Assessment
 - Protective Services
 - Senior Centers & Congregate Meals
 - Volunteer Programs: Foster Grandparent, Retired & Senior Volunteer, and Senior Companion Programs
 - Administrative Functions: Pandemic Response Team, Clerical, Human Resources, Fiscal, Maintenance, and IT.
- Potential triggers were examined that would dramatically affect the department's ability to provide service or result in a suspension of activity. Additionally, if service disruption would occur, what supportive role or alternative action by departments would best support consumers and the community during this crisis?

- Department staff was charged with identifying both potential areas of operational vulnerability and projected demand levels during a pandemic event. Specific department responses include; increased cross training of employees, operational impact of increased or decreased demand, proposed changes to business hours, and development of disinfecting procedures with required supplies.
- BSS has identified several critical services and internal functions that provide essential support to its employees, older persons and the community during a crisis. BSS plans to continue some form of these services and functions throughout a pandemic event for as long as possible without jeopardizing the health and safety of its employees, consumers and business partners. The critical services are as follows:
 - Care Management
 - Community Transportation
 - Home Delivered Meals
 - In Home Services
 - Information & Assistance
 - Medical Assistance Transportation Program
 - PDA Waiver Program
 - Protective Service
 - Administrative Functions: Pandemic Response Team, Incoming Telephone Calls, Human Resources, Fiscal, Maintenance, and IT.

c. Business Partners

- BSS has established and will maintain communication within the aging service network regarding all facets of pandemic planning, progression and reaction. During August 2009, BSS focused on its network of in-home service providers to stimulate preparedness planning and affirm chain-of-command information during a pandemic event on a 24/7 basis.
- BSS departments have updated contact lists and added alternative contact information and communication methods, i.e., business phone, cell phone, e-mail addresses to assure communication through a pandemic event.
- BSS' departments have explored alternatives to key suppliers, vendors and providers to maintain continuation of goods and services required for operations.

d. BSS Operations

- The obvious challenge will be sustaining a functional business environment within an unstable environment. BSS will prepare for employee absences, business partners unable to provide goods and services, and drastic fluctuations in the demand for services.
- BSS will rely on established federal, state, and local expertise regarding health-related issues including, but not limited to, severity of outbreak, duration of illness, thresholds for suspension of programs/services.

- It will be paramount for the BSS Pandemic Response Team to maintain an effective communication system for timely and accurate assessment reports of current conditions. The success of the BSS plan will hinge on its ability to process information then discern and effectively communicate decisions and direction to employees, consumers and business partners.
- BSS will monitor and manage the financial impact resulting from preparation to response of the pandemic. Outside of specific supplies and a nearly three-fold increase of shelf staple meals for this year, the financial implications of a serious pandemic could be dramatic and vary by department/program based on a multitude of factors.
- The Pandemic Response Team and operational locations of BSS are listed within this plan.
- Based on immediate need, BSS will reassign employees as necessary and prudent to assure continuity of essential Agency services and functions. All personnel should be prepared for possible temporary changes in their job function, work hours, worksite, workload and office procedures. Unless otherwise instructed, all employees will report to their normal job assignment and location.
- Based on immediate need, BSS may require a portion of its workforce to operate from alternative locations and a de-centralized structure.

e. Human Resources

- Beyond department implication, BSS will be open to review if established compensation and leave policies, and associated documentation, are appropriate during extraordinary absenteeism rates that could exist during pandemic event.
- BSS acknowledges a pandemic event will generate enormous demands on the healthcare system.
- BSS awareness exists in regards to employee fear and anxiety directly related to a community health crisis. Potential sources for referrals and counseling will be shared with all employees.
- BSS awareness exists in consideration of other factor that may affect attendance including but not limited to; child care, role as caregiver, school dismissal, and special employee needs.

f. BSS Communication

- First and foremost, BSS will share current status levels and decision making with all employees on a timely basis. Whether the increments are monthly, weekly, daily or hourly will depend on the situation.
- Given the media saturation of H1N1 coverage, BSS will focus on fundamental external messages of prevention, containment, and vaccination availability. As the need arises, BSS will provide open and timely announcements regarding operational status to employees, consumers and the community.

- Encourage the participation of aging network services providers in making vaccines and antiviral drugs available for disbursement to vulnerable populations and their caregivers.
- Maintain clear communication between and among all levels of government and funding sources. The pandemic response team will have lead and alternative contact persons established for communications with Commonwealth Departments of Aging/Office of Long Term Living, Public Welfare and Transportation.
- Based on feedback and inquiries, BSS will alter or enhance its channels of communications to assure timely, accurate and widespread status reports. Methods will vary by target groups including, but not limited to, employees, consumers, network providers, and funding sources.
- BSS will develop a website link at www.blairsenior.org to relay announcements and status levels of its programs and services related to a pandemic event.

BSS Location Information

Facility	Address	Contact Information
Altoona Senior Center & Blair Senior Services, Inc. Corporate Office	1320 Twelfth Avenue Altoona, PA 16601	(814) 946-1235 Main Office (800) 245-3282 Toll Free (814) 949-4857 Administrative Fax (814) 296-6301 MATP/Housing Fax (814) 296-6303 PreAdmission Fax (814) 296-6302 Intake/Clerical Fax (814) 949-4856 TDD
Production Kitchen Blair Senior Services, Inc.	1815 Ninth Avenue Altoona, PA 16602	(814) 946-1235 Main Office (814) 941-0130 Fax
Transportation Office Blair Senior Services, Inc.	600 Loop Road Hollidaysburg, PA 16648	(814) 695-3500 Office (800) 458-5552 Toll Free (814) 696-6314 Fax
Claysburg Senior Center Greenfield Twp. Municipal Building	RR 1 Box 509A Claysburg, PA 16625	(814) 239-5631
Duncansville Senior Center Hicks United Methodist Church	1211 Third Avenue Duncansville, PA 16635	(814) 695-0203
Spring Cove Senior Center Woodbury Lodge #539	118 Nason Drive Roaring Spring, PA 16673	Effective 11/2/09
Northern Blair Senior Center Blair Senior Services, Inc.	505 Third Street Tyrone, PA 16686	(814) 684-7853
Williamsburg Senior Center Blair Senior Services, Inc.	423 West Second Street Williamsburg, PA 16693	(814) 832-3625
RSVP & FGP Huntingdon County Standing Stone Senior Center	915 Washington Street Huntingdon, PA 16652	(814) 643-1572

PANDEMIC RESPONSE TEAM

Contact Info	Office/Person Lead	Area of Responsibility
(814) 329-3845 cell swilliamson@blairsenior.org	Steve Williamson President	BSS Coordination & Operations
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(814) 329-1215 cell lmoyer@blairsenior.org	Lisa Moyer Lead Care Management Worker	Long Term Living & Progress Reports
(814) 329-1229 cell lremis@blairsenior.org	Lori Remis Director of Development	Development/Media & Progress Reports