

19.8 Epidemic/Pandemic Policy

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Drafted by:	ML, BV, TVDB	Endorsed by Board on:	13/3/2020
Responsible person:	EO	Scheduled review date: March 2021	Unscheduled review 27/3/20

1. INTRODUCTION:

From time to time infectious diseases develop into epidemics or pandemics and create increased risks for the community. These occasions require specific policies targeted at the disease in question and general efforts at preparedness.

- 1.1 Interchange IE strives as far as possible to protect its participants, families, its staff, its volunteers, and the general public from infection or contagion by epidemics and/or pandemics.
- 1.2 Interchange IE will facilitate, through its policies and procedures, strategies designed to reduce risks to its participants, families, its staff, its volunteers, and the general public.
- 1.3 Interchange IE will comply with all directions from authorised public health officers and recognised medical authorities in relation to the epidemic or pandemic.
- 1.4 Interchange IE relies on the honesty and integrity of all participants, families, household members, staff, volunteers and contractors to support the implementation of this policy through self-disclosure of any exposure to or diagnosis of an infectious disease.**

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the strategies and actions that Interchange IE will take to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases that are epidemics or pandemics and control the transmission of infectious diseases when a case/s is identified.

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.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to:

Employees	Directors	Participants & Families	Volunteers	Contractors (including employees of contractors)	Suppliers	Consultants
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4. POLICY

- 4.1 Interchange IE will as far as possible, plan for and make advance preparations for the possibility that its operations will be affected by an epidemic or pandemic.
- 4.2 In the event of an epidemic or pandemic, Interchange IE will, as far as possible:
 - 4.2.1 Assist its participants and families, staff, volunteers and others, as relevant, to minimise their exposure to the illness concerned.
 - 4.2.2 Encourage and assist those who have reason to believe that they are at risk of contracting the infectious disease related to the epidemic or pandemic, to obtain a diagnosis.
 - 4.2.3 Support employees, volunteers, contractors, participants and families to take reasonable precautions to prevent infection or contagion.
 - 4.2.4 Provide relevant precautions such as personal protective equipment where required, within Interchange's resourcing capacity
 - 4.2.5 Maintain essential services and operations throughout the period of the epidemic/pandemic wherever possible within its resource capacity
- 4.3 In the event of an infectious disease being declared an epidemic or pandemic, Interchange IE requires people covered by this Policy to take the following precautions:
 - 4.3.1 Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
 - 4.3.2 Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, or shaking hands with others.
 - 4.3.3 Make sure you follow good hygiene and encourage others to do the same. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or using a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then disposing of used tissues immediately. It is your responsibility to dispose of these hygienically
 - 4.3.4 Individual staff members are to take responsibility for emptying their own rubbish bin regularly and wash hands after contact with used tissues etc.
 - 4.3.5 Stay at home if you feel unwell. Seek immediate medical attention if you believe you are infected or infectious.
 - 4.3.6 Interchange reserves the right to direct staff to make adjustments to their employment arrangements and/or to stay home from the workplace
 - 4.3.7 Staff are required to provide medical clearance prior to return to work after infection
 - 4.3.8 Follow the directions recommended by the Australian government and other health authorities. Keep up to date on the latest health alerts relevant to your role and location as to where the pandemic or epidemic is spreading widely. Avoid traveling to places especially if you are more at risk due to age or health conditions.
 - 4.3.9 If you are or are likely to be contagious, notify Interchange or your manager/ IMMEDIATELY. It may be necessary for you to self-isolate by staying at home until you recover.
 - 4.3.10 Seek medical advice promptly and follow all relevant directions.
- 4.4 In the event of an infectious disease being declared an epidemic or pandemic, Interchange IE will implement the following precautionary measures:
 - 4.4.1 Interchange reserves the right to direct individual office staff to work from home. Face to face meetings/interviews may be restricted or prohibited and where possible replaced by alternative means of communication, dependant on directions from Federal/State authorities.

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- 4.4.2 Interchange will conduct specific risk assessments and planning for individual participants and families based on their unique circumstances and need for Interchange supports
- 4.4.3 Interchange reserves the right to suspend planned supports into infected environments including the family home
- 4.4.4 Interchange reserves the right to make changes to rostered shift arrangements, including staffing, in response to contagion management, staffing capacity and business continuity requirements.
- 4.4.5 Interchange reserves the right to suspend or postpone planned group activities
- 4.4.6 Staff required to work from home will be provided with the necessary tools of trade within Interchange IE's resource capacity.
- 4.4.7 Interchange IE will respect any staff members decision not to undertake shifts, this will be managed within Fairwork guidelines
- 4.4.8 Staff are expected to follow reasonable OH&S procedures whilst working in the home environment (equipment safety and risk management relevant to the individual working conditions)

5 Leave, remuneration and employment conditions

- 5.1 Interchange IE recognises that staff may request or require paid and unpaid leave when they are unwell, at risk of, or vulnerable to, infection, and at risk of infecting others.
- 5.2 Workers may make use of leave consistent with Interchange IE's leave policy, relevant industrial instruments and the National Employment Standards (including access to unpaid leave).
- 5.3 Interchange IE may, at its discretion, direct those affected or reasonably at risk of being affected by the pandemic or epidemic, to remain away from the workplace or work remotely.
- 5.4 Interchange IE may be required to review its capacity for ongoing employment of staff, linked to its sustainability, business continuity and the impact of an epidemic or pandemic on its financial resources and operations.
- 5.5 In all circumstances Interchange will align its decisions regarding industrial relations to Fair Work Australia guidelines and the National Employment Standards.

6 Participants and Families

- 6.1 In the event of an epidemic or pandemic families will be required to respond to a safety screening for all shifts supported by Interchange staff. If any member of the household in which the shift will occur, responds positively to questions in the assessment, confirming potential or actual infection, the worker is not required to enter the house or undertake the shift, until a medical clearance has been provided.

Assessment questions include:

- *Has the family, participant or anybody living in the house experienced any symptoms related to the epidemic or pandemic?*
- *Is the family, participant or anybody living in the house under quarantine or self-isolation linked to the epidemic or pandemic?*
- *Has the family, participant or anybody living in the house come in contact with someone whom has been diagnosed with the epidemic or pandemic infectious disease?*
- *Has the family, participant or anybody living in the house returned from overseas in the last 4 weeks?*
- *Is there appropriate equipment available for handwashing and hygiene?*

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- 6.2 Families must acknowledge individual staff member's right to decide not to undertake a rostered shift if a participant or household member is visibly unwell when they arrive for their rostered shift, whether or not the condition is classified as an infectious disease during times of epidemic or pandemic
- 6.3 Families are expected to notify Interchange immediately if anyone in the household, including the participant shows symptoms aligned with the current epidemic/pandemic.
- 6.4 Cancellations of rostered shifts will be managed in line with NDIS funding guidelines. This applies to cancellations made by the participant/family, staff member or Interchange
- 6.5 If anyone in the participants home has received a diagnosis of infection, a medical clearance will need to be supplied to Interchange IE prior to return staff returning to work in the home

7 Notes

Above and beyond provisions

- 7.1 Where possible during an epidemic or pandemic, Interchange IE will aim to provide workers with flexibility to work remotely and to attend medical appointments.

In carrying out the procedures in this policy, Interchange IE will be guided by the information and directions provided by State and Federal governments, local health authorities, the World Health Organisation, and its occupational health and safety obligations.

8 Related Documents

- a. Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza ([AHMPPI](#))
[Vic - Victoria](#)
- b. Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN) for Critical Infrastructure Resilience: [Template Pandemic Emergency Management Plan](#)

9 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)*
- *SCHADS AWARD*

** Pandemics are declared by the World Health Organisation. This policy also applies to outbreaks of Infectious Disease in Australia and Victoria in particular

