

## What If I Get Sick?

If you or a close family member get sick, you have several different leave options available.

### Sick Leave

Most Federal employees who become ill may request to use their accrued sick leave for their own illness or to care for a family member who is ill or receiving medical treatment. You may also use sick leave if health authorities or a health care provider determines your exposure to a pandemic influenza virus jeopardizes the health of others by your presence on the job, even if you have not fallen ill yourself. See your agency policy guidance for specifics on the use of sick leave.

### Annual Leave

You may also have the option of requesting the use of accrued annual leave during a pandemic health crisis. This option would most likely be used when you anticipate a longer absence than your available sick leave hours would enable you to take. For example, if you have accumulated 35 hours of sick time, but need 9 or 10 working days (72-80 hours) to recuperate from the flu, you may use annual leave for the remainder of the time you need to be out.

In addition to annual leave, you may request to use available compensatory time off, earned compensatory time off for travel, or credit hours earned under a flexible work schedule. Contact your agency for specific policies in this regard.

### Voluntary Leave Transfer and Leave Bank Programs

You may qualify to receive donated annual leave if you or a family member has a medical emergency and you do not have available annual or sick leave. The voluntary leave transfer and leave bank programs allow you to receive donated annual leave from fellow employees. Each Federal agency must have a voluntary leave transfer program in place, and some Federal agencies also have voluntary leave banks. Check with your agency for more information about these programs.

### Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Family and Medical Leave Act gives you the right to take up to 12 weeks of leave without pay for a serious health condition or to care for your spouse, son, daughter,

or parent with a serious health condition. You may request to substitute any or all of the unpaid leave with available annual and/or sick leave within the rules for using annual/sick leave. For more information on the leave options available to you, consult with your agency's human resources office or visit [www.opm.gov/pandemic](http://www.opm.gov/pandemic).

The most important point to remember as a Federal employee is that while you and your family are in no immediate danger, we must be prepared for any situation. Should an influenza pandemic occur, the disease could spread rapidly and disrupt the lives of many people. Working together, we can ensure America is ready.

## Flu Prevention: Common Sense Tips

Flu prevention begins by taking some common sense steps to keep you and your family safe. These simple tips may help prevent the spread of influenza ([www.cdc.gov/flu/workplace](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/workplace)):

- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.
- Clean your hands often with warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers. Keep a supply on hand at your home or office.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Infections may occur when germs are picked up through touching infected surfaces and then ingested into the body through openings such as the mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick and see a doctor when needed. If you are sick, you can play an important role in controlling the spread of the disease by maintaining your distance from others.



# Preparing for Pandemic Influenza

## Helpful Information for Federal Employees



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

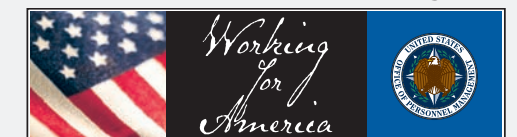
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In early 2006, President George W. Bush issued an *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza* – a document which directed each Federal department and agency to develop a comprehensive preparedness plan in the event of an outbreak of pandemic influenza in the United States.

Under the President’s direction, the Office of Personnel Management is charged with providing guidance to Federal employees and agencies on human capital management strategies, pay and leave policies, alternative work arrangements such as telework, and important health information.

This document contains general information for Federal employees. You should consult your supervisor or appropriate human resources office to learn your own agency’s policies on the topics discussed in these pages. This guide seeks to provide handy, easily-understandable information that Federal employees should have to prepare for a possible pandemic influenza.

## What is Pandemic Influenza?

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus causes high numbers of illnesses in humans and spreads rapidly throughout the world. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person. Currently, there is no pandemic flu.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a pandemic is a global disease outbreak. A flu pandemic occurs under the following conditions:

1. A new influenza virus emerges, against which there is little or no immunity in humans;
2. It must spread easily from human to human; and,
3. It must infect humans and cause severe illness.

The avian influenza A (H5N1) virus, often called “bird flu,” is causing illness and death among poultry and has caused more than 250 illnesses in humans, as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO). The H5N1 virus is a cause of concern among health officials as a potential pandemic virus. The virus has been found in Asia, Europe and Africa. Although the spread of this virus to humans has been limited, should the virus evolve into a strain that could spread efficiently from person to person, a pandemic could ensue.

Additional information is available by visiting the Federal Government’s official pandemic Website at: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

## Maintaining Government During an Influenza Pandemic

President Bush and the Office of Personnel Management are committed to maintaining a working Government should an influenza pandemic occur in the United States. Plans and strategies have been developed to ensure continuous operation of Federal agencies and authorities.

The Office of Personnel Management has worked to ensure Federal employees have easy-to-access information on how an influenza pandemic could affect you and what options you have. Federal employees may be especially concerned about how a pandemic influenza outbreak could affect your jobs and livelihood.

The following pages are designed to offer you condensed information on leave and pay options during a pandemic and tips on how you can avoid the spread of flu.

## What Are My Work Options?

Pandemic influenza may cause you to be unable to work from your office, or you may have obligations outside the office because of a pandemic which might prevent you from going to work. This could be for any number of reasons. It could be that you, or close family members, are ill or contagious. Or a decision may be made to reduce the potential for contact by recommending employees either recently sick, or in contact with those who were, remain home.

In the event of a pandemic, one way to slow the spread of disease is for people to decrease contact with each other, an approach known as “social distancing.” Workplaces may provide opportunities for influenza to spread, so in the event of a severe pandemic, Federal employees who are able to do so may be afforded an opportunity to telework from home and/or work an alternative schedule. You may need to request an alternative work schedule in situations where your time available to work is limited to periods when an alternative care provider is able to care for your family member.

The alternative work arrangements offered by the Federal Government are designed to assist you in balancing work and family responsibilities. Alternative work arrangements include flexible and compressed work schedules and telework arrangements. It is a good idea to explore these options in advance so you can make a smooth transition if necessary.

### Flexible Work Schedules (FWS)

Under normal circumstances, flexible work schedules (FWS) allow you – with supervisory approval – to choose your work arrival and departure time and FWS day off within limits set by your agency. In a pandemic, flexible work schedules may provide you with greater flexibility in meeting your biweekly work requirement. Within the requirements established by your agency’s FWS policy, you may request a flexible work schedule to meet your biweekly work requirement while recovering from the flu or caring for a sick family member. General information on flexible work schedules is available at [www.opm.gov/oca/WORKSCH/HTML/AWSFWS.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/WORKSCH/HTML/AWSFWS.asp).

Talk to your supervisor to learn of any FWS rules specific to your agency.

### Compressed Work Schedules (CWS)

Compressed work schedules (CWS) are fixed work schedules that allow you – with supervisory approval – to complete your basic 80-hour biweekly work requirement in less than 10 workdays. Under a compressed work schedule, arrival and departure times and your scheduled work day off do not vary from one pay period to the next. Like an FWS, a CWS allows you maximum flexibility to manage work and family responsibilities in the event of a pandemic. Check with your agency to learn of any agency-specific rules regarding CWS. General information is available at: [www.opm.gov/oca/WORKSCH/HTML/AWSCWS.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/WORKSCH/HTML/AWSCWS.asp).

### Telework

All agencies have telework policies, and some employees have agreements in place that allow them to work either from home or from another location convenient to their home a few times per week or per month, as appropriate.

You may explore the possibility of telework for social distancing purposes or to allow you to work part-time from home while recovering from the flu. You may also be able to telework during periods when an alternative care provider is available to care for a sick family member. If you are currently teleworking, discuss how to handle a pandemic scenario with your manager,

and make any necessary changes to your agreement. Individuals not currently teleworking should discuss the possibility with their manager of emergency telework should it become necessary, and consider entering into an agreement. You should practice telework regularly enough to ensure computers and other communications systems work and ensure you establish a comfort level working from a remote location. Please check with your supervisor to learn about your agency’s telework policies.

For general information, “A Guide to Telework in the Federal Government” is available at: <http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/agency2a-guide.pdf>.

## What About Pay?

Federal agencies are taking steps to ensure there will be no disruptions to your paychecks during an influenza pandemic.

In the event of a flu outbreak, you may be asked to work from home or to work non-traditional hours, evening hours, weekends, or Federal holidays. In some cases, you may be eligible for premium pay.

A wealth of information is available regarding the different types of premium pay offered by the Federal Government. The following Websites provide detailed information. You should also check with your agency’s human resources office for information and programs specific to your agency.

For information on Overtime Pay, visit: [www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/FACTOT.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/FACTOT.asp)

For information on Night Pay for General Schedule Employees, visit: [www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/NIGHT.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/NIGHT.asp)

For information on Sunday Premium Pay, visit: [www.opm.gov/oca/worksch/HTML/sunday.htm](http://www.opm.gov/oca/worksch/HTML/sunday.htm)

For information on Federal Holiday Pay, visit: [www.opm.gov/oca/WORKSCH/HTML/HOLIDAY.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/WORKSCH/HTML/HOLIDAY.asp)

### Evacuation Pay

During a pandemic health crisis, your agency may order you leave your office and work from an alternate work location, such as your house, under its evacuation payment authority. This is one way to facilitate social distancing. If you are ordered to evacuate your worksite under this authority, you will receive evacuation payments. Evacuation payments reflect your regular pay and are paid on your regular payday. For general information on evacuation payments, visit: [www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/EVAC.htm](http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/EVAC.htm).