In 2008, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) completed a needs assessment of 1,500 licensed child care centers. Results show that more can be done to prepare the early education and child care community for a pandemic influenza. The survey results also indicated that while knowledge of and preparation for a pandemic influenza was poor, child care center directors were willing to take steps to improve preparedness. The top choices for improving preparedness were use of print materials, participation in training sessions, and access to downloadable or interactive web-based tools. The purpose of this handout is to recommend topics, strategies, and resources that can be used to improve preparedness for pandemic influenza within child care settings.

Face-to-face training sessions are an effective way to help early education and child care program staff learn how to improve day-to-day preparedness and determine plans to respond when there is an active infectious disease outbreak or pandemic influenza. Asking a local pediatrician, health department representative or qualified child care health consultant to present a professional development session is a great way to engage these partners in child care health and safety activities. Also, such teaching activities help develop relationships that keep staff informed of current community preparedness efforts. A strong connection between child care and public health leaders is critical. During a pandemic, recommendations and communication strategies evolve rapidly. Early education and child care programs need to be aware of existing mechanisms for information dissemination and decision-making.
Instruction of early education and child care providers about infection control and pandemic influenza preparedness should include the following topics for discussion:

**Infection Control During an Infectious Disease Outbreak:**
- What constitutes an infectious disease outbreak, epidemic, pandemic, and public health emergency
- Role of hand washing, cough/sneeze etiquette, and personal hygiene/sanitation practices
- Protocols for effective cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting of toys and other objects/surfaces
- Use of symptom, illness, and absence records as well as daily health checks
- Importance of written infectious disease control, hygiene and sanitation, and immunization policies
- Importance of and options for collecting immunization record data for children and staff in child care and using the data to identify children and staff who need to be referred to their health care providers to fill gaps in the vaccines they have received to meet recommended schedules.
- Benefits of partnerships with child care health consultants and local health care professionals

**Pandemic Influenza Topics:**
- What constitutes a pandemic and when it becomes a public health emergency
- Difference between seasonal and pandemic influenza viruses (transmission, spread, and severity)
- Why young children are at increased risk during a pandemic
- Which children may be at highest risk during a pandemic
- Importance of annual seasonal influenza immunization for children and child care providers as well as approaches to supplemental vaccine when recommended by public health authorities (e.g. as in the H1N1 pandemic influenza )
- Importance of family preparedness, employer contingency planning, and business continuity strategies for early education and child care programs
- Lessons learned during the H1N1 pandemic influenza
  - Challenges of this pandemic; why the US was not prepared
  - How to respond to anti-immunization misinformation and vaccine refusals
  - Use of laboratory testing, hospitalization, and other data
  - Review of clinical trials for H1N1 vaccines; why children initially need 2 shots, etc.
  - Role of the media in providing updates (discussion of “the worried well”)
  - Why certain public health departments, primary care physicians, emergency hotline personnel, and hospital emergency departments were overwhelmed; how child care programs can help
Appendix:
Preparing for Infectious Disease Outbreaks or Pandemic Influenza

Steps for Improving Preparedness
• Develop a written emergency/disaster plan that includes a process and timeline for updating this document
• Identify “trusted sources” of health information (CDC, health department, community pediatrician, and child care health consultant)
• Establish protocols/assignments for communication systems that can be used in an emergency. This would include a process to share key information as well as an immediate alert plan. Compile and maintain a list of community contacts and key phone numbers in advance to be ready to communicate during an emergency
• Determine who will monitor information and health alerts and report back on key findings
• Develop a process for sharing key information with staff, parents, and children during an emergency
• Prepare template handouts for staff and parents in advance
• Discuss the process for ordering supplies (and maintaining inventory) during times of staff absences or when there is an increased need for certain hygiene or cleaning supplies
• Use seasonal influenza as an opportunity to practice preparedness and response efforts
• Collaborate with community partners on preparedness activities or contingency planning
• Review criteria for and steps involved in facility closure
• Implement steps to support families and employees to develop personal preparedness plans

Strategies
In addition to the steps described above, encourage child care programs to implement one or more new strategies to enhance preparedness, such as:
• Provide seasonal influenza immunizations on site at the child care facility
• Collaborate with nearby centers on the use of substitutes, mass supply ordering, or training
• Create a Web site or answering service message to provide daily updates to clients
• Form a team that includes a child care health consultant and/or local public health representative to make decisions during an outbreak or pandemic
Resources
American Academy of Pediatrics
• AAP Children and Disasters Web site http://www.aap.org/disasters/index.cfm
• AAP Preparing Child Care Programs for Pandemic Influenza Web site http://www.aap.org/disasters/pandemic-flu-cc.cfm
• AAP Healthy Child Care America Web site www.healthychildcare.org
• Hand Hygiene http://aapredbook.aappublications.org/news/MIDCCS2hygiene.pdf
• Outbreaks, Epidemics, and Other Infectious Disease Emergencies http://aapredbook.aappublications.org/news/MIDCCSOutbreaks.pdf

US Department of Health and Human Services
• H1N1 Flu: Resources for Child Care and Early Childhood Programs www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/childcare
• FLU.gov http://www.flu.gov/index.html

Other
North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center Pandemic Flu in Child Care Trainer’s Manual: The Pandemic Flu and Child Care trainer’s manual is designed to increase a trainer’s knowledge of pandemic influenza and provides the trainer with the content, handouts, and a PowerPoint presentation that instructors can use to teach early care educators about pandemic flu. The curriculum covers an introduction to the flu, preventing the spread of flu in child care settings, preparing for pandemic flu in child care and responding to pandemic flu. For more information or to order a copy, contact the NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center at jackie_quirk@unc.edu.

California Child Care Health Program Preparing for Pandemic Flu in Child Care Programs http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/pdfs/healthandsafety/PandemicFlu_EN_020210.pdf

Healthy Child Care Pennsylvania WellCareTracker™: an immunization tracking and child care health record quality improvement tool http://www.wellcaretracker.org/index1.php

Workshop on Pandemic Flu http://www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org/section.cfm?subID=15&scope=all

Additional resources http://www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org/


Washington Coalition for Safety and Health in Early Learning Informational materials for child care providers and parents; available in multiple languages. www.del.wa.gov/publications/development/#flu