



Business Continuity Guide: Contingency Planning for Infectious Disease Pandemics

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Foreword

This document is a guide on business continuity planning for enterprises, especially for the small and medium sized enterprises in Singapore, to help them deal with infectious disease pandemics. This guide has been developed using principles in the Singapore Standards for Business Continuity Management (BCM).

Please note that this guide is not exhaustive and does not cover all situations and businesses. Technical inputs on medical and public health aspects were sought from the Ministry of Health (MOH) for the development of this guide. This guide should be read with the relevant advisories issued by MOH. Users of this guide are advised to seek professional help on specific information relevant to their particular circumstances.

As there is ongoing research in the area of infectious disease outbreaks, SPRING Singapore reserves the right to make amendments and deletions to this guide without notice to reflect new developments in this area.

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Introduction

This guide is meant as a general reference for enterprises in planning for a pandemic caused by influenza and other novel respiratory infections (e.g. MERS-Coronavirus, SARS-Coronavirus). It can be adapted to meet the needs of the different businesses and organisations. It suggests actions enterprises may take at each alert code (as determined by the MOH). These recommendations address key risks to the company's:

- Employees.
- Processes and business functions (e.g. production, sales and marketing etc).
- Business infrastructure (e.g. offices, shops, factories, equipment, etc).
- Stakeholders (shareholders, suppliers, customers, etc).
- Communications, both internal and external.

What is a Pandemic?

A pandemic is an outbreak of an infectious disease that has spread widely across a large geographical region, or even worldwide. Examples of novel respiratory infections which have caused pandemics include **influenza** and **SARS**.

A pandemic can occur at any time of the year and the pattern of spread, severity and mortality cannot be predicted accurately till the disease emerges. Generally, a pandemic occurs when three conditions are met:

- A new infectious agent (usually a virus) emerges for which there is no human immunity;
- The new infectious agent is capable of infecting humans and causing serious illness;
- The spread of the infectious agent among the human population is efficient and sustained.

National Strategy for Responding to a Pandemic

No one can predict when a pandemic will occur. Our national strategy for pandemic response is to establish an effective surveillance system to detect the importation of the novel infection and mitigate the consequences when the first epidemic wave hits. Our objective is to sustain the nation through the first epidemic wave by minimizing mortality and morbidity. The National Strategy will ensure preparedness for vaccination of the entire population if and when a vaccine becomes available. The national response serves to achieve the following:

- a. Maintain essential services in Singapore and limit social and economic disruptions.
- b. Reduce morbidity and mortality through treatment of cases.
- c. Slow and limit the spread of influenza to reduce the surge on healthcare system.

Key components of the National Pandemic Readiness and Response Plan will include:

- a. Infection control, including use of personal protective equipment where appropriate.
- b. Antiviral medication for treatment and preventive prophylaxis, if available.
- c. Vaccination, if available.
- d. Public health measures to contain or reduce transmission (e.g. quarantine, social distancing).

More details on the national response and the pandemic response matrix, i.e. Disease Outbreak Response System Condition or DORSCON framework, can be found in the **National Pandemic Readiness and Response Plan for Influenza and Other Acute Novel Respiratory Diseases**, published on MOH's website (see **Annex 1**).

Possible Impact of a Pandemic

In the event that a pandemic does occur, the consequences and business impact may be felt in a number of ways and the severity may vary over time. The following situations may arise:

General Impact

- Public gatherings may be discouraged.
- People with flu-like symptoms (e.g. cough and fever) may not be allowed in public places.
- Public transport may be disrupted.
- Rumours may arise, and people will want regular updates and clarifications.
- Public health care system may be over-whelmed.

Business Impact

- A large percentage of employees in any organisation may be absent from work at the peak of a pandemic.
- Supply chain may be disrupted and reduction in demand for products.
- The number of customers may drop, especially for businesses in the service sector catering to the public.
- Likely increase in electronic communications, e.g. phone-calls, email and internet use. Communication systems and company call centres may be overloaded.

Business Continuity Planning (BCP)

Given the likely business impact, we encourage enterprises to start planning now to ensure that their businesses remain viable in the event of a pandemic.

All businesses should develop BCPs for an infectious disease pandemic and should appoint a Pandemic Manager (see **Annex 2**) to ensure that employees are familiar with the plans and comply with them during a pandemic. The following is a series of steps that businesses can take to ensure adequate preparation for business continuity.

1. Planning for adequate staff coverage for essential business activities through appropriate human resource management

- Develop a continuity of leadership plan in the event of absence of key decision makers and executives.
- Identify critical business functions and essential staff. Businesses can begin cross-training workers to ensure that critical functions are maintained.
- For businesses with foreign workers who may be impacted by travel restrictions, develop continuity plans that may include provision of accommodation in Singapore for these workers for the entire duration of the pandemic.
- Develop alternative working arrangements where possible, e.g.
 - o Implement telecommuting plan which could include the provision of equipment to facilitate video conferencing and Internet access from home.
 - o Stagger working hours to reduce the exposure of employees to infected persons onboard public transportation during crowded peak times.
 - o Advise pregnant employees to work from home.
 - o Create teams of workers who work in different offices or at different times. This will reduce contact between the teams and ensure continuity of operations when one team of workers fall sick or have to be quarantined.
- Review health insurance policies for workers.
- Determine Staff Management Policies dealing with absenteeism due to Quarantine Orders (QO), workplace closure, sick leave, overseas travel and recall of non-critical staff and families from affected countries etc.

2. **Safeguarding of employees' well-being through instituting appropriate control and health measures**
 - Educate employees on infection control and good personal hygiene.
 - Develop a medical surveillance plan to ensure the quick identification of individuals with fever or other relevant symptoms. Daily medical screening, thermal scanning and temperature-taking should be considered, with the knowledge that these activities will not identify all infectious persons.
 - Consider holding a stockpile of infection control supplies such as masks, gloves and disinfectants.
 - Exercise readiness to implement public health response measures, e.g. contact tracing and social distancing, as advised by the MOH.
3. **Managing relationships with suppliers, service providers and customers**
 - Identify essential suppliers and service providers, and discuss continuity issues with them.
 - Identify essential customers and ensure that plans are in place to meet customer needs.
 - Develop a plan on how & when to activate:
 - a. Alternative suppliers.
 - b. Alternative delivery means to customers.
 - Develop plans related to visitor screening and restriction.
4. **Maintaining effective communications with employees on pandemic-related issues**
 - Begin communication with employees before a pandemic occurs in order to set expectations. Employees should be aware of business policies that will impact them, such as medical monitoring and sick leave.
 - Develop a robust communications plan to track employee absenteeism so that critical functions are fully staffed on a daily basis.
 - Begin a dialogue with key external stakeholders such as suppliers, service providers and customers on potential contingency measures during a pandemic.

Activation of the BCP

The DORSCON alert levels provide information on the expected public health impact of a novel or re-emerging infectious disease outbreak. The DORSCON alert levels should be used as a guide as to when an organisation will activate their business continuity measures and adopt infection control measures at the workplace. As there may be a gradation of responses within each DORSCON phase and response measures may change during an actual outbreak, companies and organisations should build in buffer capacity and flexibility, where possible, in their existing BCP, so that measures can be ramped up or stepped down, in line with the advisories on public health measures that will issued by the MOH.

ALERT: GREEN

What It Means:

- Mild disease OR severe disease but does not spread easily.
- Public Health Impact is low.
- Disruption to daily life is not expected.

Advice to public:

- Emphasize education, social responsibility and personal hygiene.
- Heightened awareness amongst members of the public,

e.g. more people are vaccinated against flu and travellers exercising precautions when going to affected areas overseas.

Recommended Actions for Enterprise:

Employees

- Update contact details of staff.
- Update staff policies on:
 - Overseas travel, e.g. avoid non-critical travel to flu-affected areas (if travel advisory is issued)
 - Absenteeism and extended medical leave, e.g. staff compensation
 - Recall of staff based in affected areas (if travel advisory is issued)
- Stock up on appropriate PPE and medical equipment (e.g. thermometers, disposable gloves, surgical masks and N-95 masks) and undertake training to familiarise staff with their usage.
- Increase personal hygiene awareness (see Annex 3).

Processes and Business Functions

- Develop screening and isolation procedures for visitors and staff (see Annex 4A-G). Designate isolation room(s) and routes from workplace and reception to the designated room(s) (work with your facilities management).

Business Infrastructure (Equipment and Facilities)

- Prepare telecommunications access for employees working from home / off-site, e.g. telephones, fax machines, servers, laptops, etc.
- Ensure environmental cleaning guidelines for work places are updated.

Stakeholders (Suppliers / Customers)

- Update contact information of key suppliers and customers (see Annex 5).
- Identify customers, suppliers and shareholders who are likely to be affected by the pandemic, e.g. due to border closures or travel restrictions.

Internal and External Communications

- Create general awareness of flu and preventive measures among staff. Consider various communications channels such as briefings, newsletters, intranet or email.
- Include sources of flu information such as websites of the MOH (see Annex 7).
- Develop an external communications plan for various alert levels aimed at customers, suppliers and shareholders.

ALERT: YELLOW

What It Means:

- Mild disease that may be spreading within Singapore, that could cause severe illness in vulnerable groups OR Severe disease that is spreading overseas but not yet in Singapore.
- Public health impact from low to moderate.
- Disruptions to daily life are expected to be minimal.

Advice for public

- Maintain personal hygiene and exercise social responsibility.
- Look out for health and travel advisories from MOH.

Recommended Actions for Enterprises

(In Addition to Earlier Recommendations):

Employees

- Monitor developments in affected areas and implement policy on overseas travel and recall of staff from affected areas (if travel advisory is issued).
- Monitor staff who visited affected areas (follow guidelines issued by the MOH).
- Follow latest health advisories issued by MOH.
- Issue appropriate PPE and medical equipment, as advised by MOH (e.g. thermometers, disposable gloves, surgical and N-95 masks).

Processes and Business Functions

- Monitor developments in affected areas. Update plan on how/ when to activate:
 - a) Alternative suppliers
 - b) Alternative delivery means to customers
 - c) Systems and facilities for working from alternative site or working remotely

Business Infrastructure (Equipment and Facilities)

- Activate equipment for remote communications access to affected areas, e.g. video-conferencing.
- Clean and disinfect common areas within your workplace, including cleaning of the air-conditioning system (work with facilities management and/or air-con technicians).

Stakeholders (Suppliers / Customers)

- If necessary, activate plan for alternative suppliers.

Internal and External Communications

- Reassure staff by briefing them on your company's business continuity plan and what to do in the event of higher alert levels (Orange and Red).
- Brief staff on external communications plan, e.g. what to say, when and to whom.
- Inform customers and suppliers about your company's business continuity plan, which should include:
 - a) How your company will continue to receive supplies
 - b) How your company can continue providing goods and services

ALERT: ORANGE

What It Means:

- Severe & transmissible disease that is in Singapore but its spread is contained.
- Public health impact from moderate to high.
- Disruptions to daily life are expected to be moderate.

Advice for public

- Maintain personal hygiene and exercise social responsibility.
- Look out for health and travel advisories from MOH.
- Comply with control measures to limit spread of the disease in the community e.g. quarantine, symptom and /or temperature screening (see Annex 6) and visitor restrictions in hospitals.

Recommended Actions for Enterprises

(In Addition to Earlier Recommendations):

Employees

- Update staff regularly on health advisories issued by the MOH.
- Separate key staff into two or more teams to minimise disruption to business operations (if any).
- Advise pregnant employees to work from home. Companies may also arrange for non-essential staff to work from home, if operationally feasible.
- Encourage staff to stay home if unwell and monitor status.
- Activate separate housing arrangements for new or existing foreign workers returning from affected countries minimise contact with existing employees, if required.

Processes and Business Functions

- Pre-qualify alternative suppliers from unaffected areas. If no alternative supplier is available, increase inventory levels.
- Activate processes and systems to support remote access for staff to interact with customers and suppliers.

Business Infrastructure (Equipment and Facilities)

- Clean and disinfect common areas more frequently, include more frequent cleaning of air-conditioning system.

Stakeholders (Suppliers / Customers)

- Institute symptom screening (e.g. temperature checking) and contact tracing for visitors (as advised by MOH).
- Prevent visitors with symptoms from entering workplace (MOH will advise on symptoms to look out for).
- Activate alternative delivery arrangements with suppliers and customers.

Internal and External Communications

- Inform external parties of restriction on visits to company's premises.
- Update relevant customers / suppliers / shareholders if some employees have been quarantined. This will help ensure confidence in the continuity of your business.
- Inform suppliers and customers of alternative procedures for pickup / deliveries.

ALERT: RED

What It Means:

- Severe & transmissible disease that is spreading widely in Singapore.
- Essential services need added protection to ensure full operational capacity.
- High absenteeism from work may occur.
- Public health impact is high.
- Disruptions to daily life are expected to be major.

Advice to public:

- Maintain personal hygiene and exercise social responsibility.
- Look out for health and travel advisories from MOH.
- Comply with control measures to limit spread of the disease in the community e.g. quarantine, temperature screening and visitor restrictions in hospital.
- Practice social distancing; avoid crowding and gatherings (e.g. childcare centres, school may be closed and mass events may be cancelled).

Recommended Actions for Enterprises

(In Addition to Earlier Recommendations):

Employees

- Non-critical staff to work from home.
- Activate local housing arrangements for workers who commute from outside Singapore if required.
- Activate succession plan if necessary.
- Make arrangements for counselling support.

Processes and Business Functions

- Monitor / maintain contact with suppliers and customers through remote access.

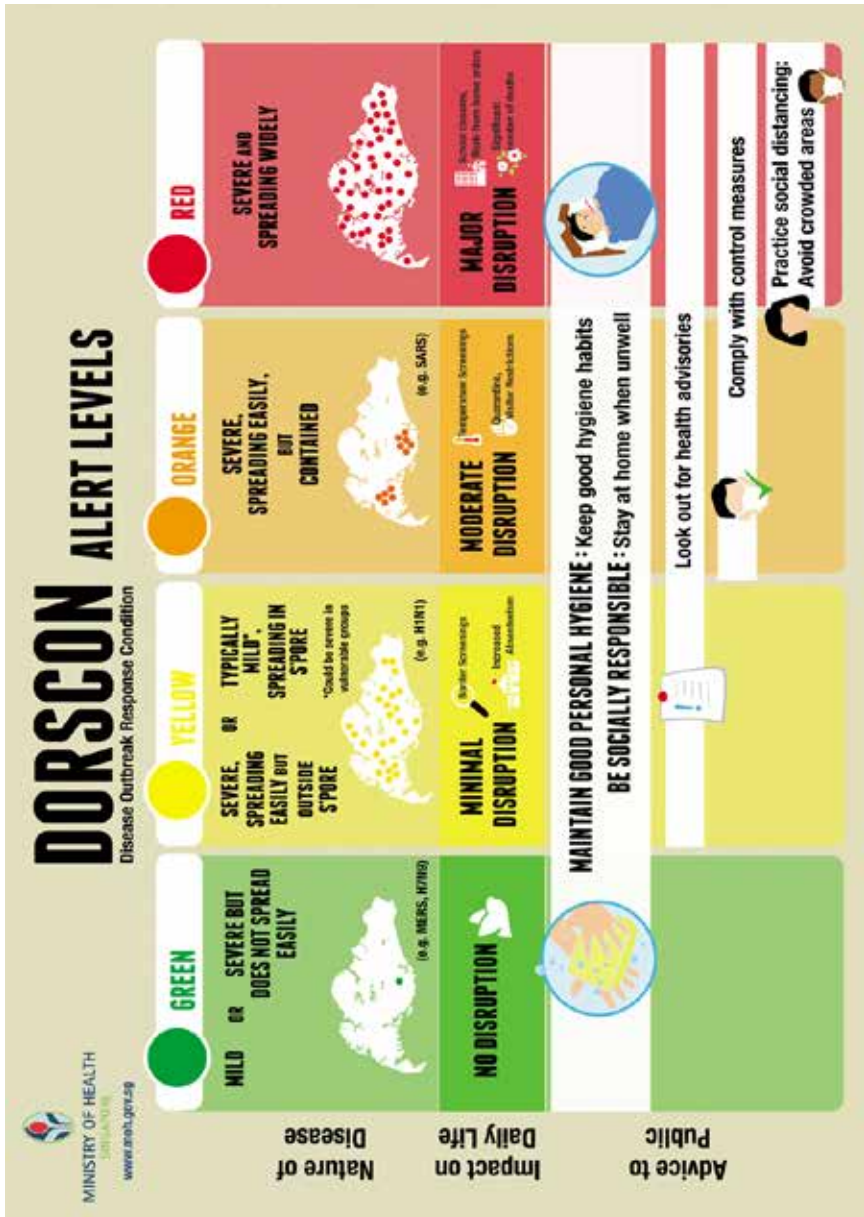
Business Infrastructure (Equipment and Facilities)

- Monitor inventory levels.

Internal and External Communications

- Regularly update staff and stakeholders of actions taken to instil confidence.

Overview of DORSCON Framework



Roles and Responsibilities of the Pandemic Manager

1. Actively monitor alert levels and work with management on message to employees in the event of activation of response measures.
2. Educate employees on the disease and the mode of transmission. Brief them on the need for infection control measures and the preventive procedures that have been set in place. Educate employees on the different types of thermometers, such as oral and ear thermometer, and the proper way of using them.
3. Collate contact information of all employees, i.e. home address/home telephone number/ mobile phone number. Make sure all employees have contact numbers of pandemic manager/assistant pandemic manager*. Employees are to contact pandemic manager if they are admitted to hospital with suspected pandemic, for contact tracing purposes.
4. Ensure that the company has appointed at least one designated Point of Contact (POC) (may be the Pandemic Manager), who will be responsible for liaising with MOH during activation of contact tracing processes at the work place.
5. Check the following websites (<http://www.moh.gov.sg>) daily for updated advisories (e.g. travel advisories) and update employees accordingly.
6. Ensure that employees who have travelled to affected areas are quarantined for a sufficient number of days (to be advised by the MOH). Check on employees' health by phone or email during his/her absence from work.
7. Appoint staff to keep quarantined employees informed of events in office.
8. Ensure that the workplace has adequate supplies of tissue paper/hand towels, disinfectants and masks.
9. Brief employees on personal hygiene measures:
 - a) Do not spit on the floor
 - b) Wash hands
 - Regularly and thoroughly with soap and water
 - Before and after preparing food
 - After going to the toilet
 - Before and after eating
 - After coughing and sneezing
 - After removing personal protective equipment like mask and disposable gloves

- c) Sneezing and coughing should be done onto tissue paper which should be carefully disposed of
 - d) Avoid sharing of cups, cutlery, etc
 - e) Avoid physical contact like shaking hands
10. Put up notices in washrooms on proper hand washing techniques.
 11. Ensure common areas e.g. pantries, washrooms, meeting rooms are disinfected daily. Liaise with cleaning staff/contractors on this.
 12. Identify a room/area in the office as the isolation room/area for employees with fever with nearby toilet facility, which is designated for his/her use. Identify the isolation route (a route that is not commonly used by employees/visitors) that leads to an area where the employees with fever can be brought to the hospital/ clinic.
 13. Identify hospital /clinics that employees with fever can be brought to.
 14. Where advised by MOH, carry out symptom or temperature monitoring of employees. If temperature monitoring is instituted, ensure employees measure their temperature twice daily (issue Annex 4g: Temperature Measurement Log to employees). Once an employee is identified to have fever (38°C and above), follow instructions in Annex 4: Procedures upon Detection of Unwell Staff.

Note:*

Depending on the staff strength of your company and the size of your company's premises, an assistant pandemic manager should be appointed as a backup to cover the duties of the pandemic manager.

Personal Hygiene Awareness

Proper hand washing requires soap and water. By rubbing, soap breaks down the grease and dirt that carry most germs. Washing your hands for at least 15 to 30 seconds with soap and water does not just make your hands smell fresh but also reduces germ counts by up to 99%.

Follow these 8 simple steps to keep your hands clean:

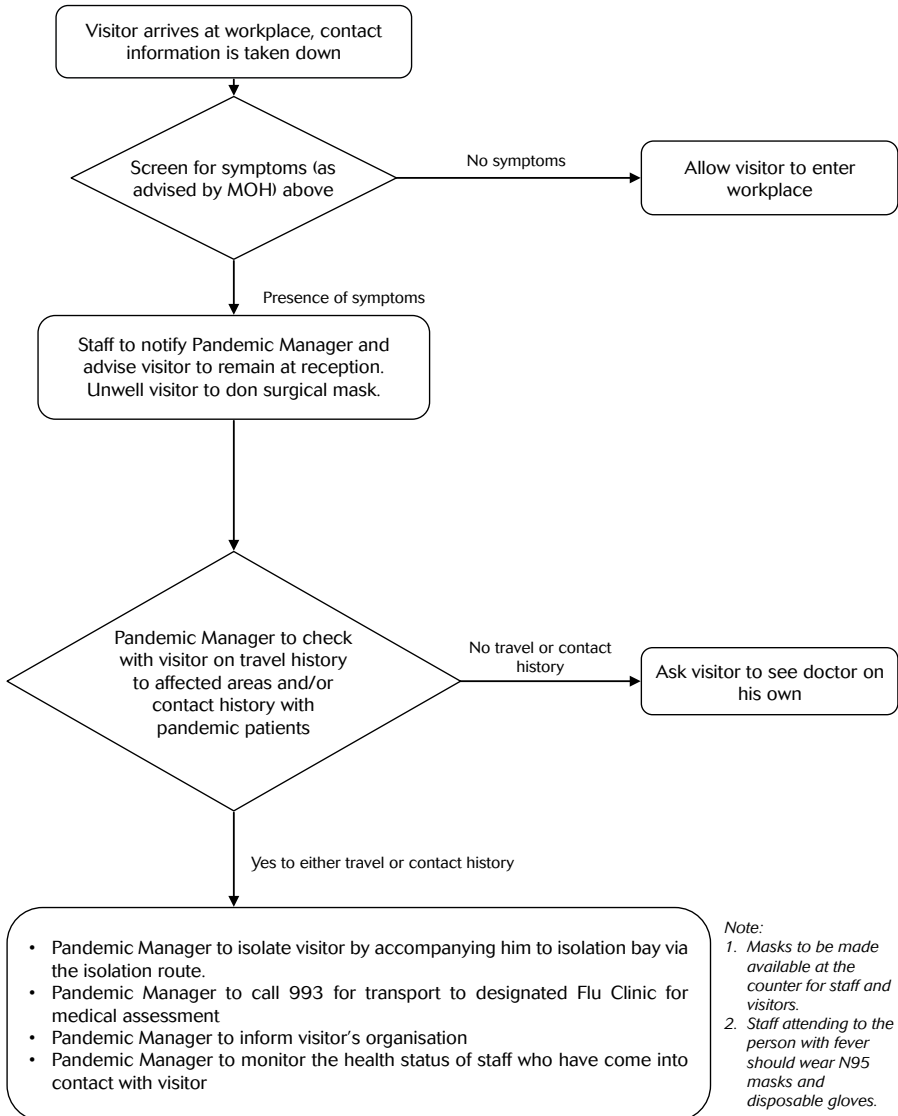
- a. Palm to palm
- b. Between fingers
- c. Back of hands
- d. Base of thumbs
- e. Back of fingers
- f. Fingernails
- g. Wrists
- h. Rinse and wipe dry



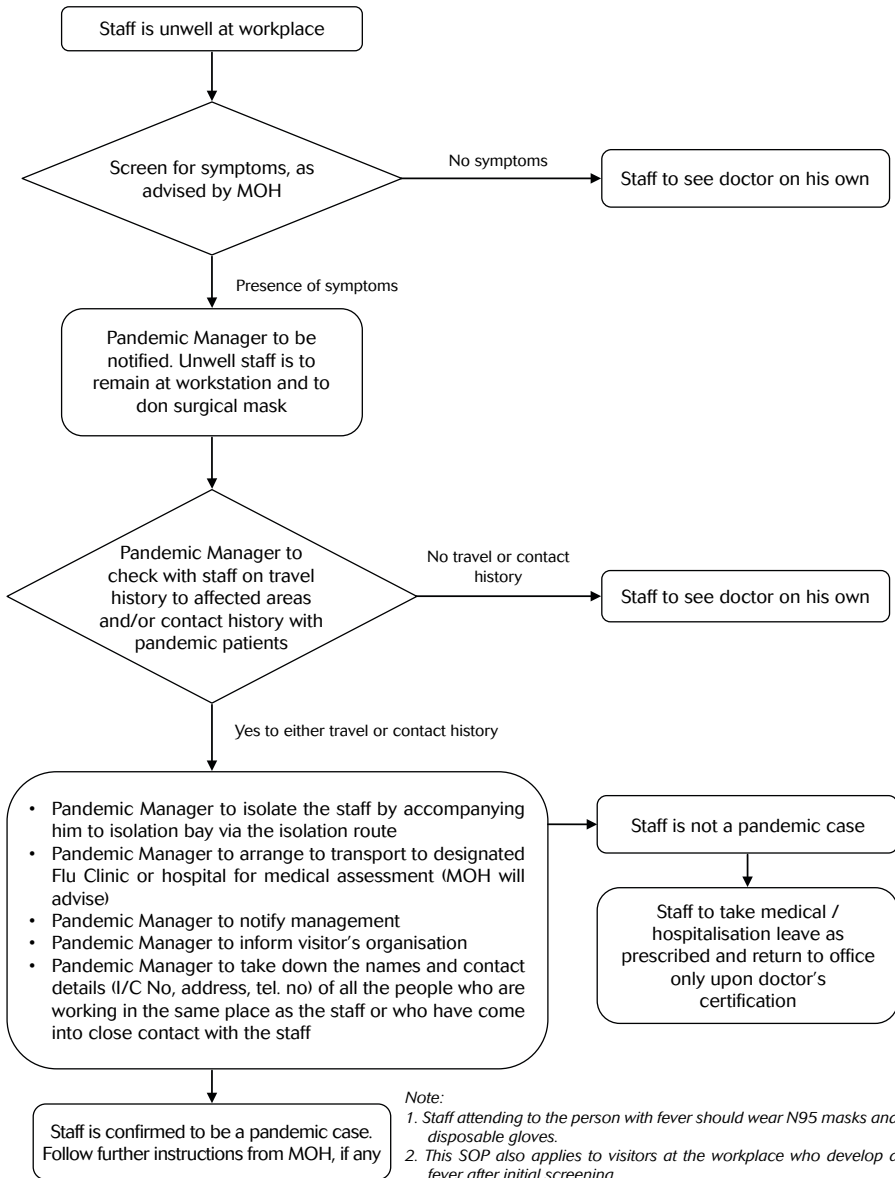
Source : Health Promotion Board

Procedures Upon Detection of Visitors & Staff who are Unwell

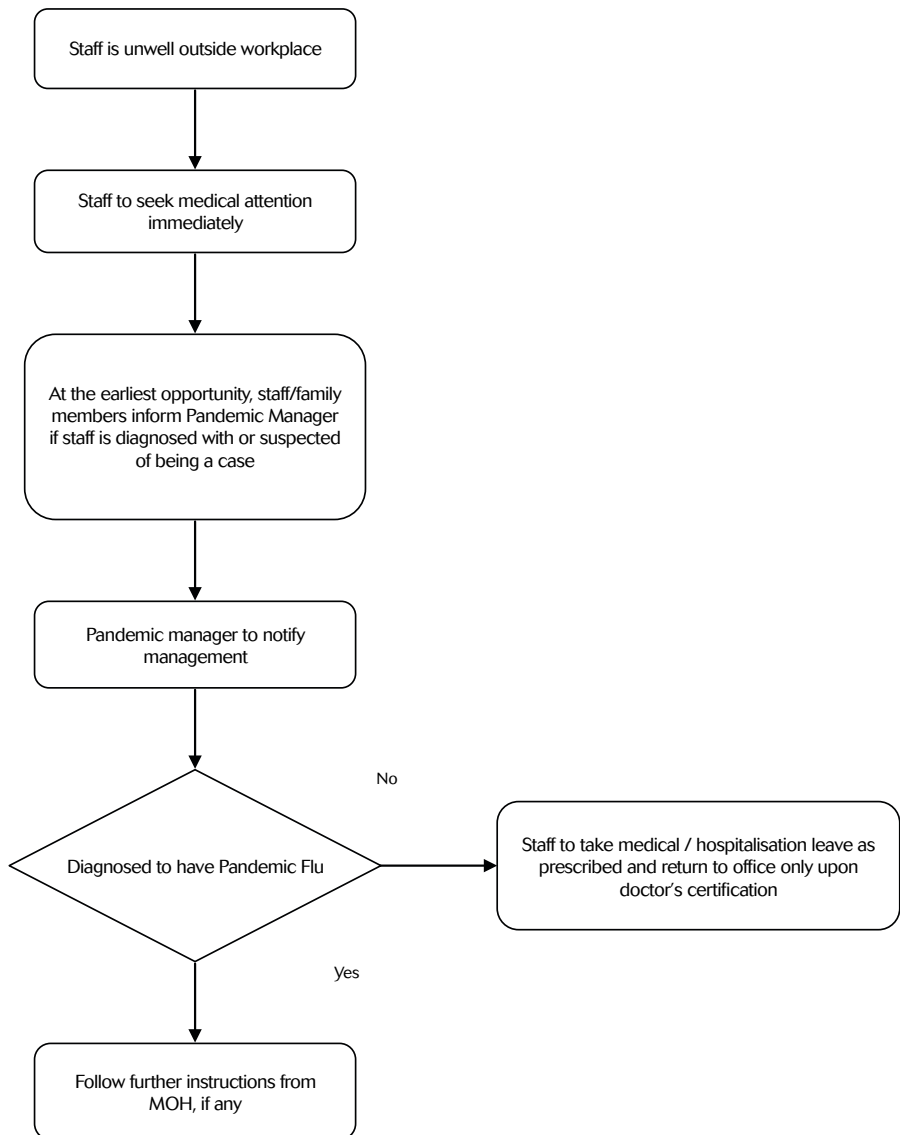
SOP # 1: Example of a workflow for Visitor Screening at the Workplace



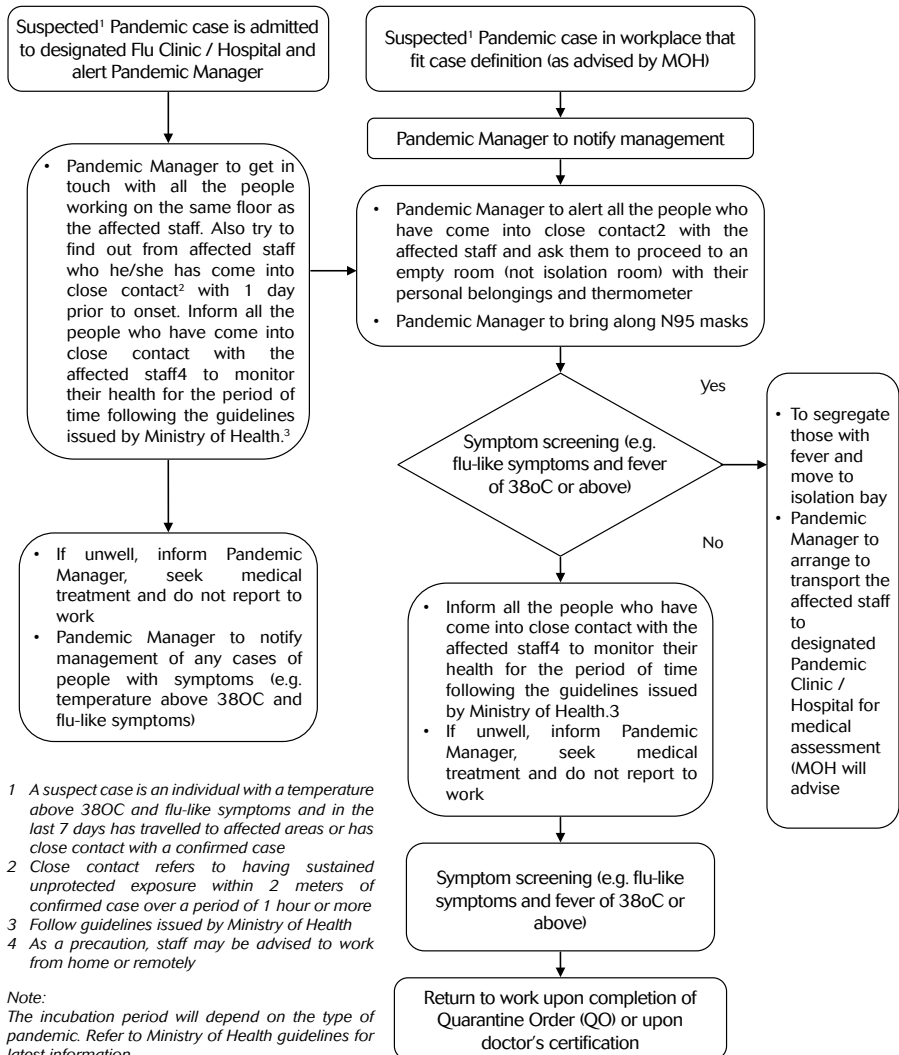
SOP #2: Example of a workflow for managing Staff Unwell at Workplace



SOP #3: Example of a workflow for managing Staff Unwell Outside Workplace



SOP #4: Example of a workflow for contact tracing during a pandemic



Example of Health Screening Form for Visitors

Dear Sir / Madam

To prevent the spread of [specify disease] in our community and reduce the risk of exposure to our staff and visitors, we are conducting a simple screening questionnaire. Your participation is important to help us take precautionary measures to protect you and everyone in this building. Thank you for your time.

Visitor's Name:	Personal Contact Nos (Hp/Home)
NRIC / Passport No.:	Nationality (For Foreign Visitor Only):
Meeting Venue / Level:	
Name / Department of Office:	Tel No.:
Temperature Reading / Record by Staff: _____	

DECLARATION	
1	<p>If you have the following symptom(s), please tick the relevant box(es)</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Fever <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Body Aches <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches <input type="checkbox"/> Sore Throat <input type="checkbox"/> Runny Nose <input type="checkbox"/> Tiredness <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ </p>
2	<p>Have you been in contact with a confirmed {specify disease} patient in the past ____days?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </p>
3	<p>Have you been to the following country(s) or are(s) in the past 7 days?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </p> <p>If your answer is yes, please indicate the affected country(s) / area(s)</p>

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Example of Notification Form**Suspected Pandemic Case at Work****Details of Affected Staff**

Name:	Worksite:	Location of Isolation:
Job Title:	Nationality: (For Foreign Visitor Only)	NRIC / Passport No.:
Address:		
Telephone No.:		
_____ (W)	_____ (H)	_____ (M)
<i>Symptoms Noticed:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Fever <input type="checkbox"/> Back Aches <input type="checkbox"/> Sore Throat <input type="checkbox"/> Tiredness <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Headache <input type="checkbox"/> Runny Nose <input type="checkbox"/> Others Details: _____		
Time of Fever On-set:	_____	
Time of Isolation:	_____	
Travel History Over the _____ Days*		
Countries Visited:	_____	
Flights Taken:	_____	
Where Referred.		
Contact List (See Separate Page)		

Details of Recording Staff

Name:
Job Title:
Telephone No.:
_____ (W) _____ (H) _____ (M)

Body Temperature Monitoring Log

Name:

Dept:

[illegible]

Please keep a record of your temperature reading twice daily

- 37.5 degree celsius & above (but below 38 degree celsius): Please seek immediate medical attention
- 38 degree celsius or more, please alert Flu Manager immediately
- Please keep temperature log for the Flu Manager's audit

Contact List

External Parties

(i) Contacts of Key Customers

Company Name	Key Contact	Contact Nos.	Fax Nos.	Email

(ii) Contacts of Key Suppliers/Vendors/Contractors

Company Name	Key Contact	Contact Nos.	Fax Nos.	Email

(iii) Others

Company Name	Key Contact	Contact Nos.	Fax Nos.	Email

Contacts of Key Personnel

Company Name	Key Contact	Contact Nos.	Fax Nos.	Email

Tips on Temperature Taking

When to take your temperature:

Wait for 30 minutes before temperature taking if you have just exercised, been outdoors, eaten, drunk or showered.

How to take your temperature:

There are different ways of temperature taking for the different types of thermometers available.

Glass thermometer

1. Wash the thermometer bulb with soap and water before use.
2. Shake the thermometer a few times to bring the level of the mercury below 35°C.
3. Temperatures can be taken from the armpit or mouth.
 - Armpit reading:
Place the thermometer bulb under your armpit. Fold your arm across the chest to hold the thermometer in place. Remove the thermometer and read the temperature after 5 minutes.
 - Oral reading:
Place the thermometer bulb under your tongue. Close your mouth and do not talk or bite the thermometer. Remove the thermometer and read the temperature after 3 minutes.
4. Wash the bulb of the thermometer with soap and water after use.

Digital thermometer

1. Wash the area of the thermometer bulb with soap and water before use.
2. Switch on the thermometer and wait until it is ready to register a reading.
3. Temperatures can be taken from the armpit or mouth.
 - Armpit reading:
Place the thermometer bulb under your armpit. Fold your arm across your chest to hold the thermometer in place. The thermometer will beep to signal that the temperature display is ready for reading. Remove the thermometer and read the temperature.

- Oral reading:

Place the thermometer bulb under your tongue. Close your mouth and do not talk or bite the thermometer. The thermometer will beep to signal that the temperature display is ready for reading. Remove the thermometer and read the temperature.

4. Wash the area of the thermometer bulb with soap and water after use.

Ear (tympanic) thermometer

1. Place a new disposable cap over the probe.
2. Switch on the thermometer.
3. Pull the ear backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal when the thermometer is ready to register a reading.
4. Insert the thermometer's probe into the ear canal.
5. Press the activation button and hold until a reading appears (some models may beep when it is ready for a reading).
6. Remove the thermometer and read the temperature.
7. Discard cap after use (use a new cap for every temperature taking).

Remember:

- It is important to read the manufacturer's instructions on the proper use of the thermometer.
- When washing glass or digital thermometers, wash only the area in contact with the mouth/skin as the thermometer may not be waterproof.
- Do not talk when taking an oral temperature or move about when taking an armpit temperature.

Do you know...

- Temperatures taken at different parts of the body present different readings – those taken from the armpit are lower than readings from the mouth and ear.
- For adults: if the armpit temperature is over 37.0°C, the oral temperature is over 37.3°C, or the ear temperature is over 37.7°C, you have a fever.
- Children (below 12 years) have a fever if the armpit temperature is over 37.2°C, the oral temperature is over 37.5°C or the ear temperature is over 37.9°C.
- The normal temperature for healthy adults and children ranges from 36.2°C to 37.2°C and the average normal temperature is taken as 37.0°C.
- Children tend to have higher body temperatures due to higher metabolic rates.

- Women who are ovulating may have temperatures that are 0.5°C higher due to hormonal changes in their bodies.
- Adults over 65 years of age may have temperatures that are 0.3°C lower because of lower metabolic rates.
- The times of the month and day also affect your temperature. The body is at its lowest temperature at 3am when it is at rest, and at its highest at 6pm after a busy day. To ensure accurate readings, it is advisable to take your temperature at the same time every day.

Adapted from the Health Promotion Board website: <http://www.hpb.gov.sg>

Further Information and Assistance on Pandemics and Pandemic Planning

Information on Pandemics and Public Advisories (local)

1. Ministry of Health (http://www.moh.gov.sg/content/moh_web/home/diseases_and_conditions/pandemic-preparedness.html)
2. Health Promotion Board (<http://www.hpb.gov.sg>)

Business Enquiries and Assistance

Singapore Business Federation (<http://www.sbf.org.sg>)

Information on Pandemics and Business Continuity Planning (international)

1. World Health Organisation (<http://www.who.int>)
2. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>)
3. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3327pandemic.pdf>)

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