

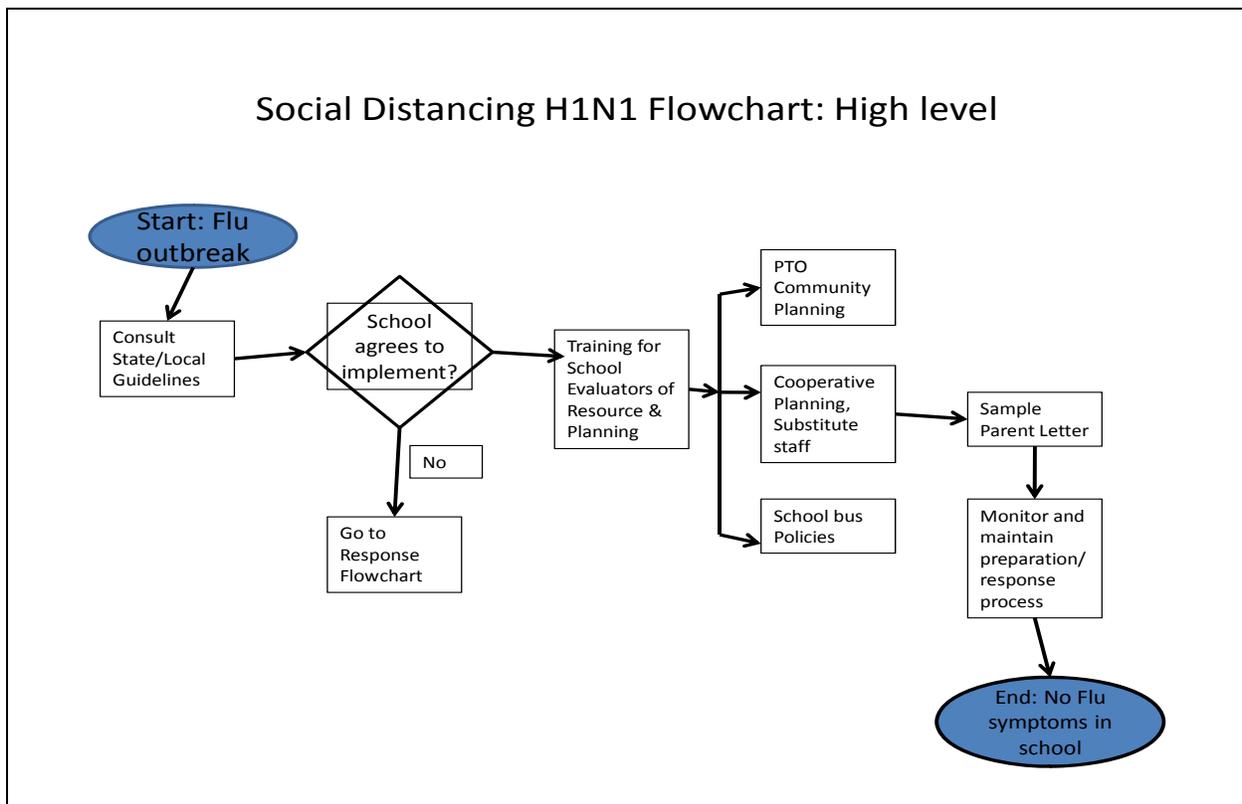


Quality Improvement in Public Health Example: H1N1 and Social Distancing

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The tools and techniques of Quality Improvement (QI) can produce rapid results in improved operating efficiency. Properly applied, QI allows leaders and employees to choose an improvement plan which integrates smoothly with existing priorities. Effective use of data gathering and analysis, leadership, and communication tools maintain accountability as improvement tasks are conducted. Existing resources are coordinated with other priorities to maximize outcomes while eliminating waste. Documentation and performance management techniques ensure alignment with strategic objectives and transparency of operations.

In the summer of 2009, Kansas Department of Health and Environment QI teams used flowcharting to create a new information alert system. The figure below shows the team's design to inform parent and school groups efficiently of the presence of H1N1 within the community. The QI team identified three major channels for information. The teams subsequently used their new flowcharting skills to design isolation activities for infected individuals through social distancing in the schools when a student presented with H1N1. Fortunately, H1N1 did not reach epidemic levels within the state. Developing the new communication system enabled local health departments to establish more efficient relationships with schools and Parent-Teacher Organizations for a broader range of communications, while the lessons learned from studying isolation techniques within schools are being applied by some school systems for any situation where a student exhibits symptoms of infectious illness.



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