

# School Closures in Response to A/H1N1: Issues for Decision-Makers

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# Spring 2009 School Closures

- Started with NYC high school on April 23
- Ultimately
  - 726 U.S. schools closed
  - Affecting 368,282 children

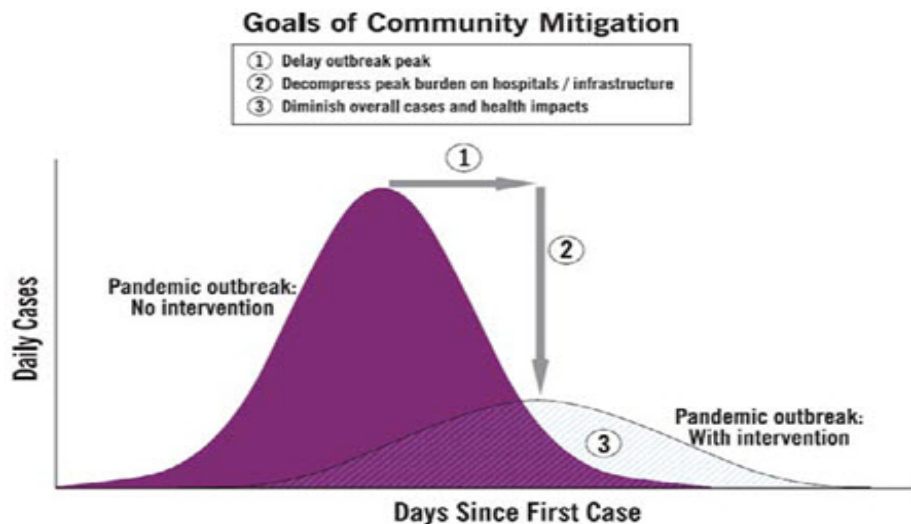


# Systems Improvement

- Great variability in decisions signals a problem with PHEP system
  - Goals of closure
  - Whether to close
  - Triggers
  - When to reopen
  - Who decides

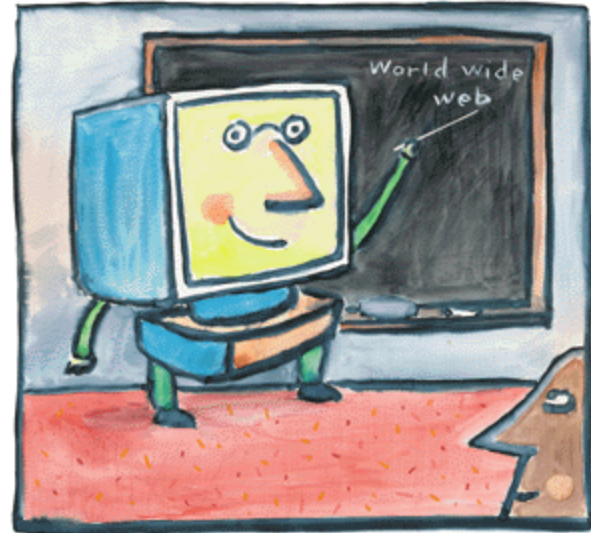
# Clarify the Goal

- Goals may differ
  - Limit spread in the community
  - Protecting children from consequences
  - React to staff shortages or children kept home



# Clarify the Goal

- Depending on goals
  - Alternatives to closure may be more effective



- Trigger for closure may be later



# Clarify Authority and Decision Processes

- Laws and practices vary
  - from state to state
  - community to community
  - whether emergency has been declared
  - what type of emergency has been declared



# Clarify Authority and Decision Processes

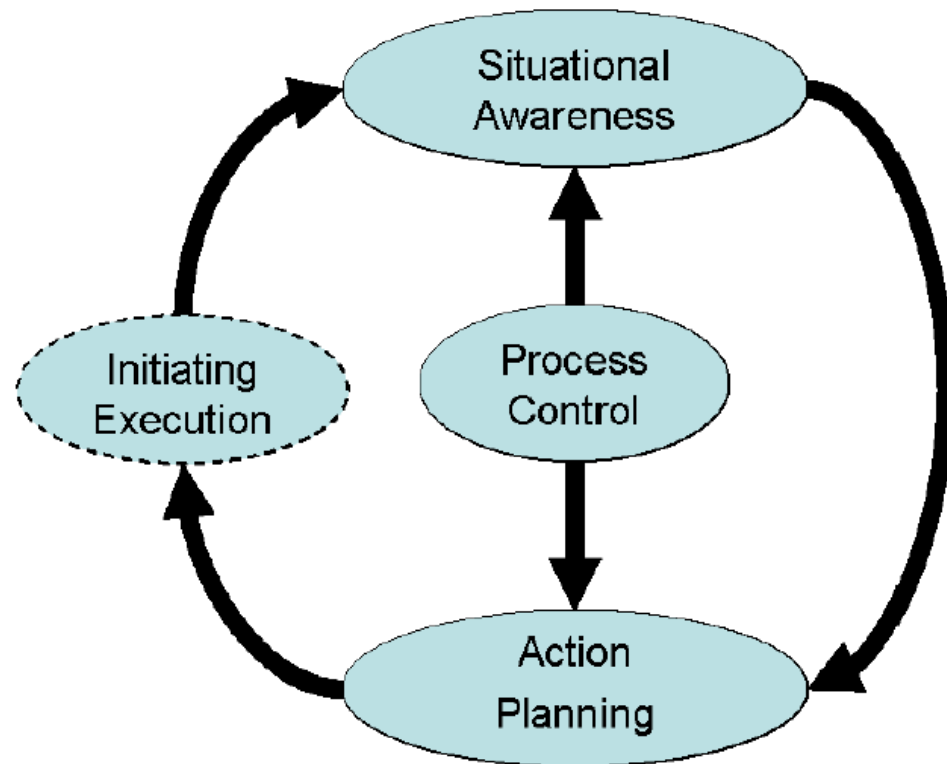
- Who's at the table
  - Perspectives and concerns
  - May depend on goals





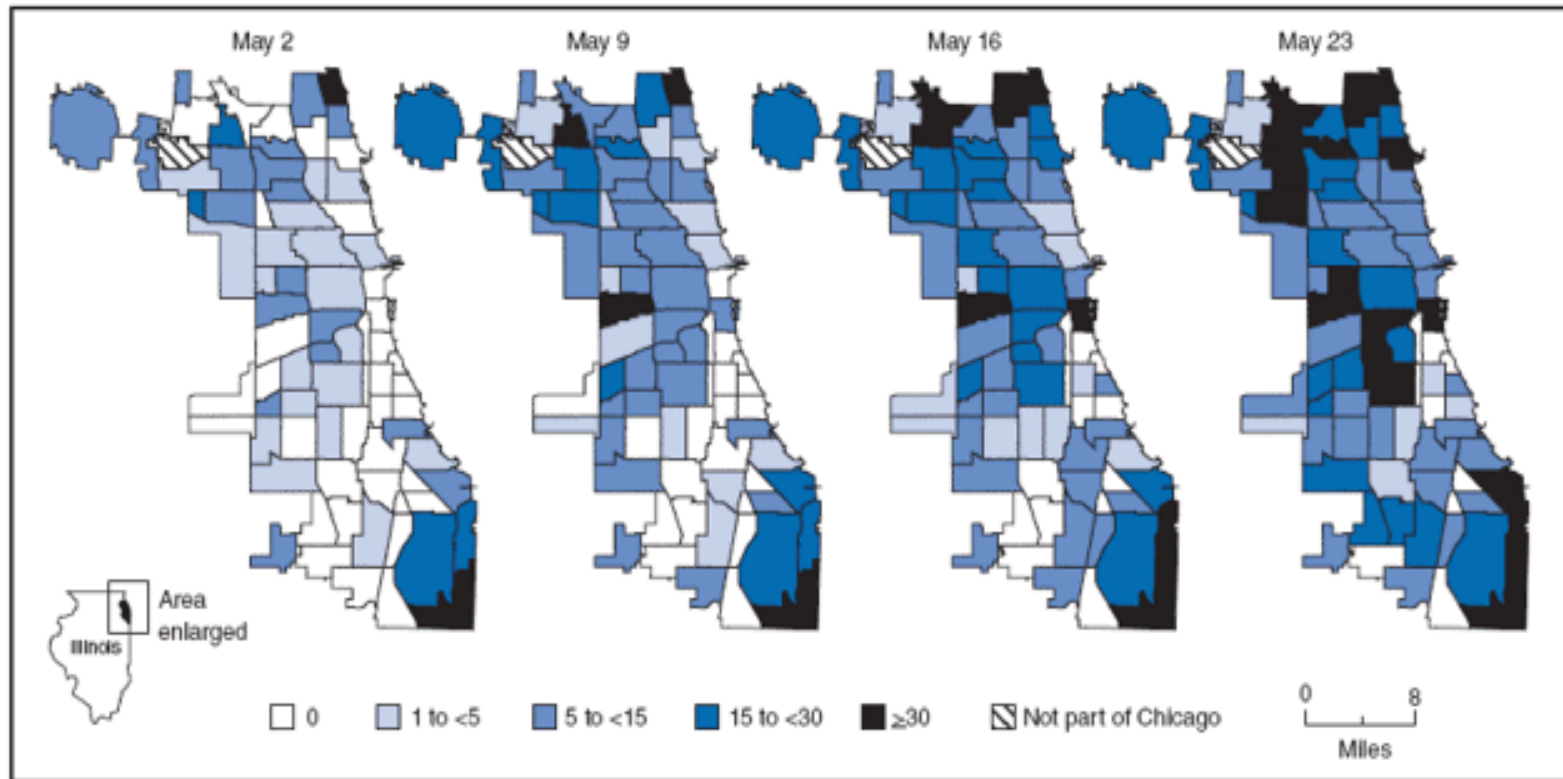
# Clarify Authority and Decision Processes

- How decision process is structured



# Expect uncertainty

- Data on transmissibility, virulence, and effectiveness of preventive strategies



# Expect Uncertainty

- Frequent changes in:
  - Case definition → triggers
    - Probable, suspected, confirmed cases
  - Official guidance → apparent official dissonance

# Expect Uncertainty

- Need for
  - Flexibility
  - Monitoring impact of actions



# Conclusion

- PHEP system improvement will require
  - Consideration of Goals
  - Clarification of Authority
  - Expectation of Uncertainty

# QUESTIONS



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