

11/18/05

**Pandemic Influenza**

**Continuity of Operations Plan**  
**(COOP)**

**for Massachusetts Hospitals**

Prepared by the  
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V. H

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## **Foreword**

Organizations including corporations, non-profit organizations, government agencies and other businesses are responsible for the safety of their employees, and also have a moral and legal obligation to their employees, stockholders, and especially, the customers and communities they serve to continue to operate in a prudent and efficient manner even in the circumstance of an impending or existing threat or actual emergency. In the event of an influenza pandemic, state agencies in Massachusetts will make every effort to continue operations subject to limitations on resources including materials and equipment, and human resources. This plan outlines a comprehensive approach to ensure the continuity of essential services during an influenza pandemic while ensuring the safety and well being of employees, the emergency delegation of authority, the safekeeping of records vital to the agency and its clients, emergency acquisition of resources necessary for business resumption, and the capabilities to work at alternative work sites until normal operations can be resumed.

## **Section I: Plan Assumptions**

Plans to continue operations will need to be flexible to address the effects of an influenza pandemic on the organization's operations. The following list of assumptions outlines the potential impact on an agency's organizational capacity to continue operations.

An infectious agent associated with an influenza pandemic, terrorist attack, outbreak of food borne illness, or similar event, may cause serious reductions in the availability of staff available for work and/or their capacity to operate efficiently. In such cases, a staff contingency plan must be developed in advance to address critical functions throughout the organization.

Contingent assumptions:

- Staff levels may be significantly reduced due to high levels of illness and hospitalization
- Staff may be lost due to significant mortality associated with disease
- Remaining workers may be psychologically affected by disease, family concerns, concerns about economic loss, or fear, and require behavioral assistance
- Staff may be reduced by the need for some workers to attend to family illness or to children remaining at home due to school closures.
- Human resource reductions may be temporary or may be long-term depending on the severity of the influenza strain

## **Section II: General**

### **2-1 Purpose**

This Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) provides policy and guidance to ensure the execution of essential functions in the event that government agency operations are threatened.

### **2-2 Applicability and Scope**

This document applies to all personnel and associates at \_\_\_\_\_(agency and worksite) of \_\_\_\_\_(agency/organization).

### **2-3 Responsibilities**

- a. The \_\_\_\_\_(Name and Title) is responsible for the development of viable and executable contingency plans for COOP for \_\_\_\_\_(worksite)
- b. Each corporate office, headquarter, division, etc. will develop and maintain a current COOP that identifies its essential functions and the individuals to support them.

### **2-4 Definitions**

The following terms or phrases are found in this document.

*Continuity of Operations (COO):* Internal organization efforts to ensure that a viable capability exists to continue essential functions through plans and procedures that delineate essential functions; specify succession to office and the emergency delegation of authority; provide for the safekeeping of vital records and databases; identify alternate operating facilities; provide for interoperable communications; develop alternative scheduling to offset staff losses; provide staff support during emergencies; and validate the capability through tests, training and exercises.

*Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan:* Plan that provides for the continuity of essential functions of an organization in the event an emergency prevents occupancy of its primary headquarters building, or an event that limits operations through extensive staff losses or other resource limitations.

*COOP Emergency Staffing Plan (CESP):* Plan to address severe losses in staffing due to disease, natural disasters or other emergencies that threaten operations through harm to human resources.

*Staffing Response Team (SRT):* Pre-designated principals and staff who deploy immediately upon threat of or an actual emergency event when human resources must be diverted, rescheduled or supported to facilitate continuing operations. This team will address human resources issues and arrange for employee support.

*COOP Event:* Emergencies or potential emergencies that may affect a department or agency's ability to carry out its essential functions, such as, but not limited to: epidemics or pandemic disease; natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes or tornados; terror attacks, or related emergency events.

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*Devolution:* The transfer of essential functions, as the result of a COOP event, to another organizational element (i.e., person, office or organization, etc.) geographically located outside of the threat area.

*Employee Assistance Program (EAP):* Corporate program to assist employees with personal and behavioral health issues.

*Emergency Relocation Site (ERS):* Facility to which the CRT and CERG moves to continue essential functions in the event that a facility is threatened or incapacitated.

*Essential Functions:* Essential functions are those functions that enable \_\_\_\_\_ (X agency/organization) to provide vital services, maintain safe and quality operations, maintain the safety of employees and associates, and sustain an industrial/economic base during an emergency.

*Principal Organizational Head (POH):* The operational head of the corporation, organization or specific facility/operation.

## **Section III Operational Concept**

### **3-1 Objective: Staff Resources**

The objective of this plan for human resources is to ensure the execution of the \_\_\_\_\_ ( agency/organization) essential functions during any crisis and to provide for the safety and well being of the employees during any emergency when a sudden or ongoing and severe reduction in staff/human resources critical to the safe and effective operation of the organization threatened occurs. Specific objectives of this plan include:

- a. Ensuring the continuous performance of essential functions during an emergency;
- b. Protecting the safety and productivity of working staff;
- c. Reducing or mitigating disruptions to operations;
- d. Addressing behavioral health issues that may affect the organization;
- e. Pre-planning for potentially critical losses of staff through scheduling, identification of alternate resources, and temporary business reduction efforts;
- f. Reducing loss of life and minimizing damage and losses; and;
- g. Achieving a timely and orderly recovery from an emergency and resumption of full service to customers.

### 3-2 Concept of Execution

Emergencies, or threatened emergencies, may adversely affect the ability of \_\_\_\_\_ (agency/organization) to continue to carry out essential functions and operation. Infectious diseases, terrorist agents, and natural disasters, may contribute to high morbidity and mortality among staff. A flu pandemic for example, may affect 40% of the workforce according to recent predictions, which would decrease existing staff levels to critically low levels that would threaten the capacity of the organization to continue operations. The following levels of emergencies are defined for planning purposes for this section of the COOP Plan:

**Influenza Pandemic:** An event with widespread morbidity and mortality due to a highly contagious and dangerous influenza virus resulting in a pandemic disease event. Staff reduction levels may reach 40% or more over a period of many months depending on incidence of disease within area of worksite/facility. Staff reductions may occur due to 1) Staff illness due to disease or 2) family responsibilities due to illness in family or closure of schools, lack of caregiver support, or similar instances that prevent employees from coming to work.

\_\_\_\_\_ (agency/organization) may direct full or partial activation of the COOP Plan. Activation of the plan may initiate the transfer of essential functions or the deployment of pre-identified personnel and equipment/supplies. Activation of the plan may also involve significant alteration of work plans and assignments of staff to critical work areas; use of contractors; extension of overtime for well workers, and similar alternatives to offset staff reduction.

While an influenza pandemic will most likely be preceded by up to several months of notification before the disease actually affect staff levels, staff reductions may be sudden and severe, and will occur across organizations.

\_\_\_\_\_ ( agency/organization) will maintain routine awareness of the threat environment through normal reporting, and national/local reporting. Developing situations should be noted, with emphasis on worsening situations that could develop into crisis conditions.

It is expected that \_\_\_\_\_ ( agency/organization) will receive a warning from the MDPH prior to declaration of a pandemic; however, a pandemic influenza may last several months. Under this circumstance, the process of activation would normally enable the partial or full activation of the Plan with a complete and orderly alert, notification, and deployment of pre-designated personnel, equipment/supplies, and/or temporary transfer of selected essential functions. Without warning, the process becomes less routine, and potentially more serious and difficult.

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The Plan may be activated if adequate staff are not available for work in order to keep critical business interests operational. It should be kept in mind that the Plan is NOT an evacuation plan; rather it is a deliberate and planned deployment of pre-identified and trained personnel and/or the transfer of essential functions. Should activation of the plan be necessary \_\_\_\_\_(Title/Function)\_\_\_\_\_ will disseminate notification of the COOP Plan activation with appropriate instructions, by available means including radio, television, telephone or e-mail. Pre-identified personnel should follow the instructions given and or in accordance with the instructions contained in this COOP Plan.

If the pandemic results in loss of life, a major consideration becomes reconstitution of key leadership positions with personnel drawn from surviving departmental locations and elements, in accordance with the Order of Succession (See Section 3-7).

Following the incident, the primary effort will be the regeneration of the \_\_\_\_\_(agency/organization) office with adequate personnel (and/or facilities) to restore complete business operations. Reconstitution activities are oriented towards the identification of alternate human resources to offset staff losses for limited or extended periods of time.

When sufficient functions have been restored at the original work site and/or other occupied space or a reconstituted facility(s), \_\_\_\_\_(Title/Function)\_\_\_\_\_ or his/her designated successor can order the termination of COOP operations.

### **3-3 Staff Resource Contingency Plan**

Each Center/Bureau/Program/Division head will assess staffing needs for each organizational unit and develop a contingency plan to provide for alternative staffing in the event of a pandemic with major staff reduction. The plan will include:

1. Identification of critical operation points (COPs) necessary for continuity of operations (e.g., management staff; specific levels of expertise, training or experience; recording or documentation requirements; health and safety concerns), that may be necessary for business to continue and for workers to provide services.
2. Plan for service reduction based on need, critical nature of function as a support for organization or local population, and other factors.
3. Evaluation of potential health and safety issues that might arise through diversion of staff to new job roles and loss of critical staff in various operational positions (e.g., manufacturing).
4. Liability assessment by general counsel.

5. Identification of contractors or other staff options that may alleviate problems resulting from staff loss.
6. Identification of work options available through “telecommuting” or other off-site possibilities.
7. Assessment of flexible leave options that would allow employees to address family needs while continuing to support the employing organization through a flexible work plan where feasible.
8. Written notification to employees as to proposed contingency plans and compensation provisions, if feasible.
9. Assessment of union issues surrounding overtime issues and disaster support/sharing of responsibilities among workers.
10. Training of workers on an annual basis with regard to contingency planning and the need for personal back up plans for transportation, family needs, etc.
11. Provision of behavioral/psychological assistance through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP); local or state resources; health insurance provisions.

### **3-4 Essential Functions**

The     (Agency/Organization)     shall ensure essential function continuity or resumption as rapidly and efficiently as possible in the event of a staff reduction. The following functions are considered essential functions:

*(Note essential functions of agency)*

Essential functions should be listed in Appendix A. Any task not deemed essential will be deferred until additional personnel and resources are available.

### **3-5 Devolution of Essential Functions**

The devolution of essential functions identifies how the organization will identify and conduct essential operations during periods of severe staff reduction. The plan for devolution of essential functions includes the identification of mission critical systems; capabilities to perform essential functions given specific losses of staff and expertise; reliable logistical support, services and infrastructure alternatives; consideration of

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health, safety and emotional well being of personnel; communications between staff, and related computer/software issues.

### **3-6 Warning Conditions**

Warning conditions that may lead to activation of COOP may include the following:

- Notification from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regarding a novel virus alert or pandemic event.
- Declaration of a State of Emergency by the Governor
- Notification by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)
- Extensive or unusual usage of sick/family leave by personnel

### **3-7 Direction and Control**

#### **Succession**

The following is an order of succession for \_\_\_\_\_ (agency/organization principal) \_\_\_\_\_ if he/she is no longer able to carry out his/her functions. (Appendix B)

#### **Delegation of Authority**

Delegation of Authority under COOP creates continuity in the flow of authority from the Agency Head/POH cascading to successors. Official delegations of authority are contained in Appendix C.

A delegation of authority should include:

1. Source of the authority being delegated;
2. Position title of the incumbent being delegated the authority;
3. Authorities delegated, together with any limitations on or exceptions to their use;
4. Extent re-delegation of authority is permitted;
5. Date or event that trigger delegation (i.e., COOP implementation);
6. Date of termination or the point at which delegation is automatically revoked (i.e., 30 days);

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7. Citation of any previous delegation that is being amended, superceded or terminated;
8. Name, title and signature of the official empowered to delegate the authority specified:

The agency/organization principal or his/her designated successor, will order activation of the COOP Plan.

### **3-8 Operating Hours**

During COOP contingencies, the POH or designated individual will determine the hours of work for personnel. However, it is expected that the working hours of most staff will be similar to normal non-emergency periods.

### **3-9 Assumptions**

The execution of this COOP plan is predicated upon the following assumptions:

- a. An emergency condition may require the devolution of essential functions to other personnel or possibly relocations site(s).
- b. Some of the information and communications systems supporting operations during normal non-emergency periods may not be available.

## **Section IV: COOP Activation/Termination**

### **4-1 COOP Activation**

COOP will be activated upon notification of the Principal Organizational Head (POH) of an imminent disease threat. Upon activation the COOP Emergency Staffing Plan (CESP) and Staffing Response Team (SRT) will be deployed to implement COOP plans.

Termination of COOP will be initiated upon determination that a) staff resources have returned to normal levels and b) notification that an imminent disease threat no longer exists.

#### **4-2 Initial Actions**

Initial actions to follow COOP Activation and notification of CESP and SRT will include:

- Review of mission critical functions for the organization
- Evaluation of current staffing levels and resource deployment
- Notification of human resources, managers, union representatives and other key personnel as to status and plan implementation
- Notification of employees as to plan activation and process
- Implementation of alternative staff resource options
- Evaluation of immediate and ongoing staff needs based on existing and predicted levels of human resources available.

#### **4-3 Transition of Responsibilities to Re-deployed staff**

Transition of responsibilities according to job function analysis (see Appendix D) will occur throughout the course of an influenza pandemic. Re-deployment of personnel should be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure continuity of critical operations.

### **Section V: COOP Responsibilities**

#### **5-1 Responsibilities of Senior Management personnel**

The responsibilities of senior management personnel in the event of staff loss to a pandemic event will be to implement the agency/organization COOP and to support loss of management capabilities across the organization. (See Appendix E: Personnel Responsibilities)

#### **5-2 Responsibilities of Professional personnel**

The responsibilities of Professional and Clinical personnel will be to support critical operations at maximum feasible capacity as identified by Senior Management personnel. Professional personnel may be re-deployed to programs requiring assistance outside of their standard functional job definition.

**5-3 Responsibilities of Administrative personnel**

Administrative personnel will be responsible for providing support across the organization for key operations such as payroll, medical records maintenance, customer support, database management, and similar functions, and may be re-deployed to other programs requiring additional assistance.

**5-4 Responsibilities of Support personnel**

Support personnel will be responsible for providing services across the organization as necessary, and may be re-deployed to other programs requiring additional assistance.

**5-5 Responsibilities of contract personnel**

Contract personnel will be responsible for their assigned job function, but may be re-deployed where feasible across operations.

**Section VI: Coordinating Instructions**

**6-1 Vital Records and Databases**

Personnel will be deployed during an emergency to ensure the protection and ready availability of electronic and hardcopy documents, references, records, and information systems needed to support essential functions under the full spectrum of emergencies. Hospital personnel must be identified before an emergency in order to have full access to use records and systems to conduct their essential functions. Categories of such records may include:

- 1) Emergency Operating Records. Vital records, regardless of media, essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of an agency/organization during and after an emergency. Included are patient medical records; emergency plans and directives; orders of succession; delegations of authority; staffing assignments; and related records of a policy or procedural nature that provide staff with guidance and information resources necessary for conducting operations during an emergency, and for resuming formal operations at its conclusion.

- 2) Legal and financial records: Vital records, regardless of media, critical to carrying out an organization's essential legal and financial functions and activities, and protecting the legal and financial rights of individuals directly affected by its activities. Included are records having such value that their loss would significantly impair the conduct of essential agency functions, to the detriment of the legal or financial rights or entitlements of the organization or of the affected individuals. Examples of this category of vital records are accounts receivable; contracting and acquisition files; official personnel files; Social Security; payroll, retirement and insurance records; and property management and inventory records.

The plan will account for identification and protection of vital records, systems and data management software and equipment, to include classified or sensitive data as applicable, necessary to perform essential functions and activities, and to reconstitute normal operations after the emergency.

## **6-2 Tests, Training and Exercises**

Tests, training and exercises should be carried out regularly or at least once yearly to evaluate the COOP and improve the ability of the agency/organization to execute the COOP effectively. Testing will include a) Individual and team training of agency COOP staff and emergency personnel to ensure currency of knowledge and integration of skills necessary for plan execution; b) Internal agency testing of COOP plans and procedures to ensure the ability of the agency to perform essential and mission critical functions; c) Testing of alert and notification procedures and systems; 4) Joint agency exercising of COOP plans, where applicable and feasible.

## **6-3 Communications**

Communications systems including cell phones, email, pagers and similar mechanisms should be evaluated for interoperability and flexible exchange of use across the agency where feasible. Cell phone numbers, email addresses, and other information should be readily available to all staff who may be re-deployed, and contact information outside the agency necessary to core operations also made available where feasible for internal use and continuity of operations.

#### **6-4 Security**

Security of agency facilities, records, materials and other resources should be evaluated pre-event to determine effect of staff losses on security levels, and training requirements evaluated to address security concerns.

Security issues affecting staff safety should be evaluated pre-event to ensure that staff protection systems, e.g., identification, entry/exit management, etc. are maintained despite staff losses.



**APPENDIX B**

**ORDER OF SUCCESSION**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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