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BEST PRACTICE

Strategic National Stockpile Distribution Planning: Using Staging Sites to Segment Dispensing Processes

PURPOSE

Provides information segmenting Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) dispensing sites to manage the flow and volume of individuals and vehicles arriving at the site.

SUMMARY

Local SNS planners may consider using segmented dispensing sites to control the flow of patients and vehicles. A segmented dispensing site involves splitting dispensing site functions into multiple and distinct physical locations. This Best Practice reviews the major considerations local planners will need to take into account when developing segmented dispensing sites.

DESCRIPTION

Local dispensing sites may encounter a surge of a large number of individuals and vehicles during a mass prophylaxis event. Local SNS planners may wish to consider segmenting dispensing sites to help cope with these surges and better manage the flow of patients.

Staging Site Advantages and Disadvantages

Segmented sites offer several advantages. These include:

- Reduced traffic congestion concerned at non-segmented dispensing sites;
- Eliminating parking concerns at dispensing sites;
- Ensuring that patients can reach the dispensing sites;
- Improving security and controlling unruly patients by regulating patient flow to dispensing sites;
- Controlling the number of patients arriving at the dispensing sites; and
- Educating the public about the incident and dispensing operations while on the bus.

They can also pose several distinct challenges, including:

- Arranging for transportation between the staging site and the dispensing site(s);
- Pre-planning, securing, and rehearsing travel routes between sites;
- Increased number of security personnel to cover both the staging site and the dispensing sites;
- Possible increase in number of staff required to operate staging sites; and
- Forcing people to start at the staging site--and not travel directly to the dispensing facilities;
- Increased coordination challenges given the increased number of facilities.

Staging Site Functions

Staging sites can be employed in a variety of manners to relieve congestion at dispensing sites. For example, a staging site can be used for staff to initially screen patients, triage them, and provide initial information. The staff at a separate physical facility could dispense pharmaceuticals to the non-symptomatic patients who are transported to the dispensing facility after completing screening and triage. Symptomatic patients are transported to a hospital or other treatment facility.

A staging site can serve one or more dispensing sites. If the staging site serves no other purpose than to initially greet patient, provide some information, and control the flow of patients to the dispensing site, they are often referred to as a “queuing site.”

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention officials stated that the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services has successfully modeled the use of queuing sites for SNS distribution on computer software. This is an option available to assist planners.
- Los Angeles County has a checklist for deciding on specific dispensing and vaccination sites. The document focuses on issues of accessibility, physical characteristics, and functionality of specific sites.
- During the DC Postal Anthrax Incident in 2001, postal workers were taken by bus to DC General Hospital from their worksite at the start/end of their shifts. This practice minimized parking and traffic difficulties.

Staging Facility Requirements

Using staging sites to manage patient loads at operating dispensing sites requires that planners pre-select a sufficiently large gathering point with adequate access for ground transportation to and from dispensing sites. One example of a good staging site is a local shopping mall. At minimum, potential staging sites should have the following characteristics:

- Accessible by public transportation;
- Able to hold a large number of people, dependent on the population and number of dispensing sites of the jurisdiction;
- Ample parking for people arriving at the site in their own vehicles; and
- Basic facilities, including potable water, toilets, and seating.

Public Information Requirements

Rather than directing individuals to allocated dispensing sites, officials will need to ensure the public is directed to the staging sites and, from there, transported to a dispensing site. Individuals should also be told of the best modes of transport to get to the staging site and directions for its location.

Transportation Requirements

SNS planners will be required to organize transport between the staging and dispensing sites. In order to arrange for the use of staging sites, local planners will need sufficient resources to arrange for extra support including personnel, drivers, and vehicles. Local bus companies or school buses could be used as a potential resource because they have the required personnel, drivers, and vehicles.

Triage at Staging Sites

In the event of a communicable disease, it may be decided that staging sites should not be used because of the possibility of cross-contamination while patients are on the bus. Local planners could consider setting up triage operations at the staging sites. This would

immediately identify any symptomatic patients, reduce the burden of operations at the dispensing sites, and speed up the patient flow once patients arrive at the dispensing sites.

RESOURCES

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Receiving, Distributing, and Dispensing Strategic National Stockpile Assets: A Guide for Preparedness." Version 10, Jun 2005.
([LLIS.gov ID# 14197](#))
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Strategic National Stockpile Preparedness Course*. 12-16 Jan 2004.
- Michael Montello. *Lessons Learned from Fall 2001 Capital Region Anthrax Response*. National Institutes for Health (NIH).

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