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BEST PRACTICE

Strategic National Stockpile Distribution Planning: Staffing Dispensing Sites

PURPOSE

Discusses planning for the staffing requirements of dispensing sites for Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) distribution.

SUMMARY

After selecting facilities for use as dispensing sites and determining their internal layout and patient flow, state and/or local SNS planners should identify the staffing requirements for each site. This includes identifying the key functions of a dispensing site and how they will recruit staff for these positions. Finding necessary staff is critical to the successful operations of SNS dispensing sites and helps to maximize the site's efficiency. While the staffing of dispensing sites is primarily a local responsibility, federal and state resources may be able to provide additional staffing support.

DESCRIPTION

This Best Practice discusses planning processes for staffing SNS dispensing sites. It reviews allocating tasks, key staff positions, identifying potential staff, and staff training.

Identifying Requirements and Allocating Tasks

Planners should pre-identify staff requirements and assign specific tasks to staff and volunteers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division Strategic National Stockpile (DSNS) suggests there are three types of dispensing site staff: medical professionals (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers), volunteers (trained and untrained), and management and support staff familiar with the facility and its everyday operation.

Allocating tasks to specific staff positions will relieve the burden on dispensing site staff and reduce confusion during operations. When considering the staffing of dispensing sites, planners should identify:

- Principal functions of dispensing operations that require staff;

The [Weill Medical College of Cornell University](#) has established an online interactive spreadsheet to assist and evaluate staffing requirements for vaccination programs. State planners and officials) have recommended this as a useful tool to help plan the staffing of SNS dispensing sites.

The SNS plan drafted by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene includes a chart specifying the staff necessary at the dispensing sites and lists the baseline educational and training requirements and backgrounds for each position.

- Key on-site staffing positions;
- Which state/local trained staff could be pre-assigned with key on-site duties and positions; and
- Sources of trained and untrained volunteers. For information on the recruitment process for all staff and volunteers please see the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* Best Practice: Strategic National Stockpile Distribution Planning: Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers.

Medical and public health professionals will be in demand during a public health emergency. To the greatest extent possible, these individuals should perform specialized medical and public health functions during dispensing site operations. Other jobs and responsibilities should be assigned to individuals who are not medical or health professionals.

Key On-site Staffing Positions

It is important that planners identify the key dispensing site staff positions and how to fill them in a crisis situation. The CDC provides a list of positions in the DSNS's [Receiving, Distributing, and Dispensing Strategic National Stockpile Assets - Version 10](#) guidance, including:

- **Operations Chief or Site Manager**

- Coordinate details for dispensing operations;
- Adjust dispensing plans to suit specific sites;
- Communicate with staff and ensure supply needs are met; and
- Handle media inquiries with emergency operations staff.

The [American Society of Health-System Pharmacists](#) produced a report with position descriptions for all key duties and positions at a mass prophylaxis point of distribution. This is a useful tool to assist local SNS planners identify positions for dispensing operations.

- **Assistant Operations Chief or Site Manager**

- Assure proper set up, implementation, and breakdown of dispensing activity;
- Identify staffing and supply needs; and
- Orient triage, registration, and dispensing leaders and staff.

The [California Mass Prophylaxis Planning Guide](#) provides useful position checklists to assist planners in determining what actions need to be carried out by the principal staff at dispensing sites.

- **Greeters**

- Relay important operational information to all patients entering the site;
- Identify people who have been exposed; and
- Ensure patients receive all relevant forms, fact sheets, treatment records, consent forms, drug information sheets, etc.

- **Triage Function Leader and Triage Orientation Team**

- Establish initial triage station (possibly staffed by 2-5 people);
- Identify people who require special assistance;
- Move ill people to a sick station;
- Provide patients with sufficient information to help them determine if they may have been exposed;
- Provide patients with a basic orientation to the site flow and purpose;
- Provide patients with a list of symptoms of which they must be aware; and
- Commence the treatment record and consent form.

- **Registration Process Team**

- Help patients complete consent forms;

- Manage traffic flow through the dispensing sites; and
- Identify people with special needs.
- **Data Entry Personnel**
 - Collect and enter patient information into database.
- **Dispensing Team**
 - Review registration documents to determine appropriate antibiotics to dispense;
 - Provide medical counseling specific to the medication and patient;
 - Indicate the prescription provided on the consent form; and
 - Dispense the pharmaceuticals to patients.
- **Pharmacy Chief**
 - Monitor patient flow through dispensing and counseling areas;
 - Ensure staff are clear on treatment protocols; and
 - Establish and coordinate patient clinical briefing.
- **Pharmacist**
 - Provide drug information and counseling to patients;
 - Ensure workstations and equipment are set up and operational;
 - Ensure drug information sheets are available; and
 - Prepare and dispense special dosages of pharmaceuticals to the elderly, children, etc.
- **Mental Health Counselors**
 - Assist any individuals with extreme anxiety or panic about the situation.
- **Logistics Chief**
 - Arrange for security of equipment/supplies;
 - Work with staff to set up physical workstations;
 - Arrange for food and beverages for staff members; and
 - Provide logistical support to each station.
- **Communications Chief**
 - Arrange all on-site telecommunications equipment and
 - Act as central point of contact for communication, current directories, etc.
- **Security Team**
 - Provides protection for dispensing site staff and citizens.

[Oregon's SNS plan](#), Wyoming's SNS plan, and the [California Mass Prophylaxis Planning Guide](#) provide more information on the above staffing positions.

Identifying Potential Staff for Key On-Site Positions

Once planners have identified the key positions, they will need to determine whether a position requires a qualified health professional, trained volunteer, or untrained volunteer. Identifying requirements for each position allows planners and site managers to allocate trained staff, trained volunteers, and untrained volunteers accordingly.

Planners may decide to recruit state and local government employees and registered professionals to fill the key on-site positions. Many key dispensing site positions require training and experience in healthcare and the dispensing of pharmaceuticals. Some states have worked with local medical societies or pharmacy boards to recruit volunteer physicians and pharmacists.

Possible federal staff support options include the U.S. Public Health Service, National Pharmacy Response Team (NPRT), National Nursing Response Team (NNRT), and the Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMAT). For more information on these assets, their capabilities, and their availability, contact your local DSNS Program Services Consultant.

Other sources suggested by the DSNS include:

- Spoken-language interpreters;
- Sign language interpreters;
- General disaster-relief volunteers, including the Red Cross and local medical or public health reserve groups;
- Civic and fraternal organizations whose members who are willing to volunteer during SNS operations can be identified prior to an event; and
- Walk-in or spontaneous volunteers.

The Office of Public Health (OPH), the [Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals](#) identified the following positions and organizations to recruit staff for dispensing site:

- Office of Public Health (OPH) Regional Medical Director;
- OPH Regional Administrators;
- OPH Regional Nurse Managers;
- OPH Regional Sanitarian Directors;
- OPH Regional Administrative Managers;
- OPH Public Information Person;
- Local health unit staff;
- Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness staff;
- Local community pharmacists;
- Fire departments;
- Local chapters of American Red Cross;
- Local community physicians, nurses, and emergency responders; and
- Community volunteers.

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is planning to use trained volunteers from their Civilian Medical Reserve and Disaster Medical Assistance Teams to staff dispensing sites. These volunteers comprise of medical and logistical staff.

Considerations in Providing Staff Training

State and local planners should consider the benefits and disadvantages of the two primary approaches to staff training: pre-event training and just-in-time-training (JITT). Pre-event training through exercises, classroom seminars, distribution of education materials, and electronic media has the benefit of creating a large cadre of skilled individuals ready to begin dispensing operations. The disadvantages of pre-event training are the poor retention rates, the turnover of pre-trained staff, and the need to conduct training on a continuous basis (because of turnover and low retention rates).

A “just-in-time” or “on the job” approach to training reduces the time and expense of conducting pre-event training. It also provides a solution to the problems of knowledge retention and the retention of a core cadre of trained staff. Many jurisdictions are developing detailed job descriptions and “job action sheets” for every staff position within their dispensing site. Such a document includes an outline of critical job tasks, objectives, lines of communication and authority, and the organizational structure for site staff. Appendix T of DSNS Version 10 planning guidance provides several examples.

Planners are likely to use a mix of pre-event training and just-in-time-training. The exact mix between the two will depend on a variety of factors including: availability of training resources, numbers of individuals requiring training, and the availability of professionals, volunteers, and other staff members to participate in pre-event training activities.

RESOURCES

- American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. *Local Emergency Preparedness and Response: On the Road to Best Practices*. Georgia World Congress Center. Atlanta, Georgia. 10 Dec 2002
<http://www.ashp.org/emergency/educ-sessions2002mcm.cfm?cfid=24049094&CFToken=58780389>
- California Department of Health Services. *State of California Mass Prophylaxis Planning Guide*. Jun 2003.
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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Strategic National Stockpile Preparedness Course*. 12-16 Jan 2004
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([LLIS.gov ID# 14197](#))
- DiGregorio, Robert V. "Local Emergency Preparedness and Response: One the Road to Best Practices – New York City." Presentation during educational session at American Society of Health-System Pharmacists' Midyear Clinical Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, 10 Dec 2002.
- Oregon Department of Human Services. *National Pharmaceutical Stockpile Planning in Oregon*. March 2002.
([LLIS.gov ID# 14175](#))
- Wyoming Department of Health. *Strategic National Stockpile Plan*. Revised July 1, 2003.

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