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PRACTICE NOTE

Points of Dispensing Operations: The Yolo County, California, Health Department's Use of Online Training

PRACTICE

During a point of dispensing (POD) exercise, the Yolo County, California, Health Department utilized a Web-based training system that educated staff members and volunteers on POD operations prior to the exercise.

DESCRIPTION

From December 1 to 3, 2008, the Yolo County, California, Health Department participated in a two-phase full-scale exercise (FSE) with the University of California, Davis (UCD). The first phase occurred on December 1 and 2 and exercised just-in-time training for POD personnel and communication between Yolo County Health Department personnel and UCD officials. The second phase began on December 3 and consisted of a functional flu clinic to exercise mass prophylaxis POD plans and operations. The exercise scenario was based upon a potential novel H1N1 influenza subtype pandemic. Exercise participants included 139 players and 778 clinic patients.

In 2008, the Yolo County Health Department released a comprehensive online system that provides county personnel and volunteers with a POD operations training course. UCD personnel and volunteers used this online system in preparation for the FSE. The courses effectively introduced personnel and volunteers to POD functions prior to their arrival at the POD site. Since the system is available any time, many volunteers completed the courses after their regular work hours or on weekends.

Although the online system was effective, the FSE after-action report (AAR) noted that the personnel operating the system could be overwhelmed during a large-scale incident when many volunteers might need to use it simultaneously. The AAR observed that this could challenge the Health Department if it utilized the system during an actual mass prophylaxis activation. The AAR recommended that the Health Department develop software to automatically grade and send completion certificates to accelerate the process with little or no human interaction.

The Yolo County Health Department has implemented measures to improve the functioning of the system. However, budget restrictions prevented the department from undertaking the recommended software development. In response, the Health Department partnered with the Yolo County Human Resources Department. The Health Department transferred maintenance of the online system to the Human Resources Department, which then trained additional personnel to operate the system. The Human Resources Department advanced the system by utilizing Survey Monkey, a free, third-party online survey host, to create a version of the test that is graded automatically, which is now in use. However, the new test

does not automate the distribution of exam completion certificates. The Health Department plans to leverage this partnership until it has sufficient funds to develop more sophisticated software.

CITATIONS

Carey, Dana. Strategic National Stockpile Coordinator, Yolo County, CA, Health Department. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*, 26 Jan 2010.

Yolo County, CA, Health Department. *Operation Aggie Flu After Action Report/Improvement Plan*. 15 Jan 2009.

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