



BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance

Preparing the Justice System for a Pandemic Influenza and Other Public Health Emergencies

An Initiative of the Bureau of Justice Assistance

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) recognizes that public health emergencies, whether an epidemic or pandemic influenza, biological terrorist attack, or natural disaster with public health implications can threaten America's justice system and place the rule of law at risk. BJA has undertaken a broad-scope initiative to identify the critical planning and response objectives for local justice systems and to identify lessons learned and promising approaches in preparing the justice system for such emergencies. The goal of BJA's initiative is to ensure that the rule of law is upheld during any public health crisis, whether natural or manmade.

This initiative's design parallels the major components of the justice system: law enforcement, courts, corrections, and communities. BJA's pandemic initiative is coordinated through a consortium that includes representatives from each project and component of the system and meets regularly to discuss findings and issues.

Completed Projects:

- In May 2006 in Chicago, Illinois, BJA held a national symposium "Justice and Public Health Systems Planning: Confronting a Pandemic Outbreak." Approximately 230 representatives of federal, state, and local courts, corrections, law enforcement, public health, and other agencies relevant to pandemic emergency planning participated, representing 45 states and the District of Columbia, from a mix of large, medium, and smaller municipalities. The symposium was designed to provide attendees with an overview of the nature of pandemic outbreaks and their potential impact for state and local public health and justice systems, and an opportunity to engage in multidisciplinary discussions regarding essential planning and preparation tasks.
- Following the symposium, a CD including a summary of the symposium proceedings and presentations of the 13 plenary session speakers which focused on promising protocols was sent to each symposium participant, along with a participant follow-up form. Responses indicated that, since attending the symposium, participants have begun a range of pandemic planning activities, both interagency and agency-specific.
- Shortly after the symposium, BJA launched a dedicated web portal for pandemic planning: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/pandemic/pandemic_main.html. The web site hosts the presentations of symposium presenters, including several online video presentations, and a range of documents and resources related to pandemic planning for the courts and other justice components. The web site is continually updated.
- BJA, with support from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), recently developed and released *The Role of Law Enforcement in Public Health Emergencies: Special Considerations for an*

All-Hazards Approach, designed to guide law enforcement planning efforts related to public health emergencies.

- Since the development of this initiative, BJA has provided technical assistance to several jurisdictions, relying on a multidisciplinary pool of consultants drawn from the public administration and public health communities identified in the course of preparing for the BJA national symposium. To date, technical assistance has been provided to three state supreme courts, various associations, and law enforcement representatives responsible for planning within their own agencies.
- BJA has provided outreach to many justice components and organizations regarding planning for public health emergencies, raising awareness and identifying ongoing preparations. BJA also has developed a strong working relationship with the Department of Health and Human Services' Public Health Service (PHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Ongoing Efforts:

Courts:

Pandemic Influenza—Courts Technical Assistance Project (American University (AU)): BJA has awarded funds to AU to assist local and state courts in undertaking planning and implementation processes critical to ensure that state judicial systems have the ability to maintain the rule of law in a pandemic crisis. This unique initiative will extend through calendar year 2007 and is comprised of three main elements:

1. Preparation of a guide on pandemic planning for courts: An intensive effort to create a guide for courts as they develop and implement a pandemic influenza preparedness plan. The guide, entitled *Guidelines for Pandemic Emergency Preparedness Planning: A Road Map for Courts*, was produced by an 8-member, multidisciplinary task force representing expertise in the areas of judicial processes, public health administration, law enforcement, and judicial/public health system coordination. The guide is expected to be released by BJA in Spring 2007.
2. Preparation of multi-media briefing materials: AU is developing a multi-media presentation on pandemic emergency preparedness based on the *Guideline* and incorporating materials prepared by various contributors to the BJA-sponsored symposium. This training package will be distributed to judicial education offices in each of the state court systems and to State Administering Agencies (SAA) for use in their respective in-state training activities. One national, or two regional, "train the trainers" programs are also planned.
3. Delivery of technical assistance to state and local courts: Using multidisciplinary consultants drawn from the public administration and public health communities, this project provides technical assistance to courts already undertaking or imminently involved in undertaking pandemic preparedness planning.

Outreach to State Court Systems (National Center for State Courts (NCSC)): NCSC is actively involved with BJA's pandemic planning activities. NCSC staff served on the BJA task force to develop the *Pandemic Planning Guideline for Courts*, and participate in BJA's consortium meetings. NCSC also serves as secretariat for the Conference of Chief Justices/Conference of State Court Administrators and is therefore in a position to promote communication between BJA and the state courts regarding these pandemic planning initiatives.

Continuity of Operations Planning for Court Systems (American University and National Center for State Courts): NCSC is developing a COOP (Continuity of Operations Plan) guideline for courts to complement the court pandemic preparedness initiatives underway. Since May 2006, BJA, through American University, has provided technical assistance for COOP planning to various state court systems, assisted local district or state's attorneys in developing a template for COOP planning, and addressed various judicial associations on this topic. This project will continue to provide assistance to state and local courts in continuity of operations planning.

Law Enforcement:

Pandemic Planning for Law Enforcement and Public Safety Agencies (Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)): With BJA support, PERF is currently examining law enforcement's preparation and planning processes for public health emergencies, with an emphasis on pandemic influenza. The BJA/PERF project focuses on three primary areas:

1. Occupational medicine programs in law enforcement agencies (including police and fire clinics, general wellness programs, and medical, psychological, and physical fitness screening).
2. Risk communications between law enforcement officials and the public (including planning for communications management during a public health emergency, and the development of message templates).
3. Law enforcement continuity of operations plans (COOPs provide for departmental survival in the case of a public health emergency, with particular focus on human resources/staffing issues).

Use of Volunteers in Responding to Public Health Emergencies (International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program): With BJA support, IACP is developing materials for volunteers as they provide vital support to sworn officers and civilian personnel during a public health emergency or other disaster. The project is creating several products to further volunteer participation including:

1. A training module on developing volunteer programs and opportunities to address disasters, including public health emergencies.
2. A VIPS and disaster response training curriculum.
3. An educational video highlighting the role volunteers have in preparing for and responding to disasters.

IACP also will provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies interested in starting or expanding a volunteer program targeting disaster preparedness.

Preparing Law Enforcement Families for a Public Health Crisis (Fraternal Order of Police): The Fraternal Order of Police is developing guidelines for use by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to design and implement a law enforcement family readiness plan during a pandemic outbreak. These guidelines will help address a critical issue; in the event a pandemic outbreak calls for an extended deployment or the evacuation of a widespread area, law enforcement officers need to be assured that their families will be taken care of, freeing them to answer the call of duty.

Agency Collaboration and Achieving Citizen Compliance: BJA is supporting the development of two publications related to successful planning and implementation of pandemic plans: (1) *Public Safety-*

Public Health Collaborations: Building on Existing Frames of Reference, and (2) Achieving Citizen Compliance: Education and Risk Communication.

Corrections:

Pandemic Impact on the Corrections System (Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA)): ASCA and the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) are working to develop strategies to address a pandemic influenza. ASCA is engaging subject matter experts who will identify fundamental response needs for the corrections field and contribute to the development of effective response strategies. BJA-supported ASCA deliverables include:

1. Design of a model strategic plan for institutions to respond to pandemic influenza.
2. Creation and expansion of networks between institutional and community corrections agencies for offenders reentering the community.
3. Development of training and education materials for corrections officials.
4. Draft operational procedures for institutions, large jails, and community corrections.

Preparing Community Corrections for Pandemic (American Probation and Parole Association (APPA)): APPA is working closely with ASCA to provide guidance to community corrections agencies for formulating strategic plans and protocols for responding to pandemic flu and other crises. APPA will convene a working group to develop a training curriculum, practical guidelines, and/or policy brief detailing promising practices.

Community:

Engaging Neighborhood Watch (National Sheriffs' Association (NSA)): NSA is developing educational and informational materials to assist its Neighborhood Watch groups plan and prepare for a possible pandemic outbreak. These materials will include: checklists for volunteer organizations and individuals; communication and preparation plans for Neighborhood Watches and their community volunteers; and law enforcement-led, community-based PowerPoint presentations and accompanying facilitator guides and participant manuals.

Educating Communities on Pandemic and Citizen Response (National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)): NCPC is working with BJA to produce and distribute media outreach tools to support proactive law enforcement communication with the public concerning a pandemic influenza. The primary goal of the project is to provide law enforcement with practical tools to help build public awareness of the need to prepare for a pandemic flu outbreak; encourage the public to abide by the law in the event of an outbreak; and remind the public of its important role in supporting local plans for responding to public health concerns.