



BECOMING A CLOSED POD



A_DPH
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
Alabama Department of Public Health

PARTNERING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH

IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO....

Whether by accident or a part of a terrorist attack, a biological agent release puts millions of people across the nation at risk, including those in our community. People need preventive medications immediately, so through the activation of emergency transportation and logistics plans at the federal and state levels, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) delivers supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) destined for local public health agencies. These life-saving medications are delivered to local public health officials who have activated long-standing and well rehearsed mass prophylaxis plans via “pull and push” methods of dispensing. Most likely given this scenario, local officials will use the traditional “pull” method as its primary dispensing method and encourage the general public, via an extensive public information campaign, to come to identified locations at common areas within the community to receive medications. These locations usually consist of fixed facilities such as schools, arenas, or other public buildings and are most often referred to as Open Points of Dispensing (PODs).

But, even with extensive preparation, there are long lines at every POD site as thousands of people wait in line for their medication. People are stressed about missing work, trying to calm their children as they endure long waits, and anxiety and tempers are starting to flare. Remember, everyone may have been

SNS - THE STRATEGIC NATIONAL STOCKPILE

- A national repository of medications and medical supplies to be used for emergency situations such as a bioterrorism attack or natural disaster
- Designed to supplement and re-supply state and local health and medical resources

exposed, therefore Public Health will have to provide the necessary medication to the entire population in less than 48 hours.

If this type of scenario were to ever occur, public health officials must be ready to respond. To help meet this 48-hour timeframe, local officials across the nation are working with various organizations within their communities and establishing partnerships to develop innovative alternate dispensing options to enhance the dispensing capability. These alternate options are commonly referred to as “push” methods of dispensing. Medications are “pushed” or delivered to organizations such as private businesses, universities, or large organizations and these organizations in turn provide the medication to their designated population. **A Closed POD** is an example of a push method of dispensing.

HOW CLOSED PODS FIT INTO MASS PROPHYLAXIS

Mass prophylaxis is the capability to protect the health of the population through the administration of critical interventions in response to a public health emergency in order to prevent the development of disease among those who are exposed or are potentially exposed to public health threats.

Closed PODs will play an important role in any situation where it is necessary to provide emergency medications to large groups of people. Traditional medical providers, such as hospitals and medical clinics, will likely be overwhelmed during a large-scale public health emergency. The Open PODS established to support the public will also be highly stressed in a situation where the entire population needs medication within a short time frame. **Closed PODs** will help relieve some of the pressure by reaching specific portions of the community. As a result, long lines and public anxiety can be reduced and resources can be used more efficiently.

By partnering with public health and operating a **Closed POD**, your staff members and their family members will receive medications at your facility, which reduces the likelihood of having to visit the Open PODS. This will provide peace of mind during this crisis because they know that their organization has taken the “extra step” and conducted the necessary coordination and planning prior to an event to provide an alternative method to protect them during an emergency where medications must be dispensed. This will also ensure that staff can remain at work, thus continuing normal productivity as opposed to

having to leave work for hours to get treatment at an Open POD.

CLOSED PODs provide:

- Ease of access to life-saving medications
- Quick dispensing of medications to your staff members and their families
- Enhanced continuity of operations for the organization

Your Organization’s Responsibilities

Alabama Department of Public Health will help you prepare to set up your **CLOSED POD**, but there are steps you must take to ensure the proper plans are in place to establish and operate a **CLOSED POD** efficiently.

Your organization’s responsibilities:

- Designate staff to work in planning for the operation of a **Closed POD**.
- Provide primary and secondary 24-hour emergency points of contact to ensure timely notification and activation of your **Closed POD** during a public health emergency.
- Develop a **Closed POD** plan and provide annual updates on number of persons to be treated at **Closed POD**.
- Identify a **CLOSED POD** location for your organization.
- Maintain the necessary supplies and equipment needed to operate a **CLOSED POD**.
- Dispense medications following protocols and guidance provided by Alabama Department of Public Health.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of a Closed POD?

To provide life saving preventative medications to a designated population of people and their family members during a public health emergency.

What are the requirements for becoming a Closed POD?

To become a Closed POD, the entity must fill out the plan template provided and available at <http://www.adph.org/CEP/index.asp?ID=3711>. Entity must have a significant amount of employees, medical direction and licensed persons (RN, CRNP, MD, or Pharmacist) to dispense. Licensed persons can be employees or volunteers. Medical direction can be on site or by phone.

How much is it going to cost?

Medications are free of charge.

Will there be training provided?

Alabama Department of Public Health will provide information on training in the areas of necessity.

When would we be asked to dispense medications at our own facility?

The only time Alabama Department of Public Health would ask organizations to dispense medications to staff and their families would be if there is a great risk to the population and preventive medications must be taken immediately.

Who operates the Closed POD?

Staff members within your organization will operate the Closed POD.

Will people be allowed to pick up medications for their families?

Staff members may act as the head of household and pickup medication for up to 5 persons per form if forms are completed appropriately.

How will medication be packaged?

The medication will be packaged for individual use. Appropriate dosage instructions will accompany each bottle of medication.

Who needs to take the medication?

Under this type of emergency, the entire population within a community will need to take the medication. This includes adults and children. Appropriate dosage instructions will accompany each bottle of medication that is dispensed at the Closed POD.

What about pets?

The medications provided at the Closed POD are for humans only. Staff members with pets should contact their veterinarians for more information about the risk to their pet and any preventive measures they can take to help protect the health of their pet.

Is it possible that our organization will need to operate a Closed POD after- hours, during the weekend, or on a holiday?

Yes. Public health emergencies can occur at any time. It is essential that your organization be prepared to operate a **Closed POD** during non-working hours since your staff members' health will be at risk if medications are delayed.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Alabama Department of Public Health would like to thank you for taking the time to review this booklet to help you develop your Closed POD plan.

By developing long-lasting relationships with the private sector, government agencies will be more adept and prepared to respond to a potential public health emergency. We appreciate your cooperation.

OTHER RESOURCES

To find the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for your county, go to:
<http://alabamapublichealth.gov/CEP/assets/epteammap.pdf>

To apply and obtain more information on becoming a Closed POD, go to:
http://alabamapublichealth.gov/CEP/assets/adph_closed_pod.0220na.pdf

