

## Alternative Methods of Dispensing: Model Highlights



### Use of Community Polling Sites as PODs

Lake County Health Department, Illinois



#### Background

With a population greater than 700,000, over a 448 square mile area, Lake County Health Department has adopted a model that utilizes 149 of the County's polling sites to dispense emergency medications to heads of households in its community.

Several years ago, Lake County Health Department began planning with local high schools to serve as point of dispensing (POD) sites, but had to change their course of direction when local law enforcement raised major concerns with their ability to handle security and traffic at the proposed sites. In response, the health department brought together a broad range of stakeholders to brainstorm a better plan where the concept of utilizing community polling sites was raised.

#### The Plan

During a public health emergency event, medications and other materials from the Strategic National Stockpile will be delivered to a pre-determined drop site within Lake County. The Lake County Division of Transportation and the Lake County Sheriff's Department are responsible for transporting supplies from this drop site to designated locations within the County's 18 townships. Township Supervisors will then divide the pallets into the appropriate numbers for each municipality

in preparation for pick-up. Each municipality within the county has identified public works personnel and their own security to pick up and deliver the medications and supplies to each of the activated polling places.

Each of the POD sites will be well staffed. In addition to local health department staff and their Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) unit of potentially 400 volunteers, municipal and county employees, police, and polling judges will also serve as POD volunteers. Lake County has 6000 volunteer polling judges and workers and has identified four volunteers per polling site. Each municipality will also provide four employees per polling site located within their jurisdiction. Finally, Democratic and Republican Committeemen, who are familiar with the polling sites, are invited to sign up as volunteers as well. Local health department staff serve as POD site managers and just-in-time training is provided to dispensing site volunteers in a 20 to 30 minute session prior to opening.

#### Exercising the Plan

In a 2007 exercise, Lake County activated the plan from the point of the county drop site to a single polling site located several miles from the drop site, which was then opened and actively operated for 2 hours. With scenario cards in hand, 70 volunteer "mock" patients repeatedly went through the dispensing site. Projections of time data collected during the exercise demonstrated that all heads of households in Lake County could receive medication for their household well within the 48-hour time frame required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A second exercise, activating two polling site PODs in each of two townships located in the farthest edges of the County, was conducted on July 24, 2008 in conjunction with Chicago's Cities Readiness Initiative exercise and resulted in a 15 percent improvement in throughput.

#### Pros

- Polling places are familiar to residents and convenient to get to; usually within walking distance or a short drive.
- Polling places typically have election personnel already familiar with the polling site and associated equipment (i.e.

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### Pros Continued

- computers, location of chairs and tables, etc.) for providing prophylaxis in conjunction with health department staff and volunteers.
- The model is flexible; it allows for the activation of polling places for other types of prophylaxis (e.g. small pox, flu pandemic vaccinations, etc.) and/or in any affected part of the county.
- The polling place model more effectively disperses the population through a larger number of distribution sites.

### Cons

- This plan requires more organizational work due to the large number of dispensing sites; 149 polling sites versus six traditional PODs in Lake County.
- The plan is time intensive at the outset of planning due to the increased number of townships and municipalities which must be included in the planning process; however, once plans are in place, is fairly easy to maintain.
- Election officials can change the location of a designated polling place, which results in the need for additional planning.

### Costs/Resources Needed

- Established relationships with emergency response partners such as fire and police, municipal and township governmental agencies, regional superintendent of schools, and various volunteer agencies.
- Costs are similar for large numbers of smaller PODs as they are for small numbers of large PODs. These costs include: forms, signage, and food for dispensing site staff and volunteers during drills and actual events.
- Some training costs are also incurred with this plan. In Lake County, the health department provides training and materials for its own staff, MRC volunteers, and township personnel. The Division of Transportation and Sheriff's Department have their own response plans and train their own personnel. Municipalities have their own plans as well.

### Planning Tips

- Since counties, townships, and municipalities are government entities, they take on costs associated with their own role in implementation and activation of the plan.
- Collaboration is key! Get to know other first responders (Fire, Police, etc).
- Get comfortable working with other agencies. The more involved you are with them, the more involved they will be with you.
- Within each organization or agency there is someone who truly enjoys emergency management. Identify that person. They will in turn pull in others.

### Resources

- Flow Chart of medications and supplies from drop site to polling site(s) (PDF)

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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#### OR, VISIT NACCHO'S MODEL PRACTICES DATABASE:

[www.naccho.org/modelpractices](http://www.naccho.org/modelpractices)



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