

Push Partner Program - A Great Workforce Multiplier

BACKGROUND

Public health emergencies can occur at any time. Currently, public health open point of dispensing (POD) sites are the primary and fundamental method to dispense medications to the general public. The safety of institutionalized (e.g., nursing homes, correctional facilities, psychiatric hospitals) or “sheltered-in” populations (SIPS) must also be ensured.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) developed a “Push Partner” Program in 2006 in response to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) medical countermeasures requirements for the Cities Readiness Initiative. The push partner program emphasizes and reinforces the importance of ensuring the safety of institutionalized persons.

Public Health Preparedness staff were tasked with ensuring that push partners meet the same standards that CDC has mandated for all health departments nationwide. The push partner program builds capacity so that community partners know how to conduct dispensing operations at a proficiency level equal to that of current public health staff. The program supports are well beyond a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The program supports help partners be successful in demonstrating their dispensing plan.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

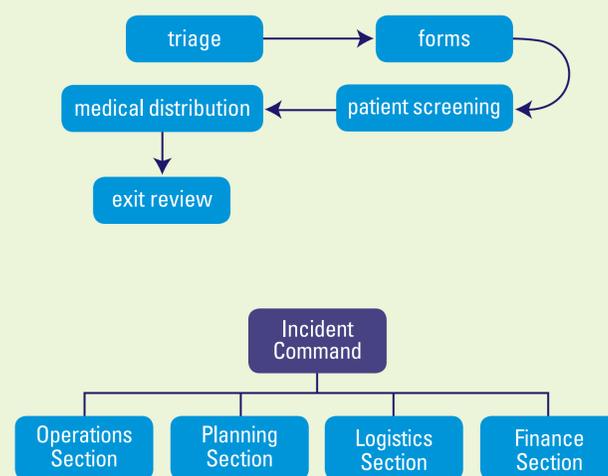
Community organizations have access through a closed POD to life saving medications for their clients, staff, and family members. This will help local health departments divert some of the congestion a dispensing site would have during a catastrophic emergency. This will save critical resources when needed the most and while accomplishing the task of mass prophylaxis in a timely manner.



WHO SHOULD BE A PUSH PARTNER

- First Responders
- Hospitals
- Large Corporations with Medical Staff
- Volunteer Organization
- Long Term Care Facilities
- Nursing Homes
- Universities
- Department of Corrections
- Tribal Partners

EXAMPLE CLINIC FLOW



PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Push partners are trained in all aspects of the planning process and participate in exercises that allow them to demonstrate understanding of dispensing operations. Training and exercises are tracked and documented using the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). This helps develop a strong professional relationship with partner agencies as well as ensure push partners will be successful. Additional areas identified for minimal training with push partners include:

- Educating partners on the Strategic National Stockpile Program (SNS)
- Operations training
- Document minimal training requirements in the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- Incorporate Functional Needs Populations as required
- Ensure signed MOU with site -specific plans
- Use training matrix for Push Partners progress
 - General information collection on Agency (contact information gathering)
 - Assessment Phase
 - Plan Review Phase
 - Dispensing Competency Performance Phase

The tools that were developed and tailored to meet the special needs of the push partners are:

- Dispensing Plan Template
- Job Action Sheets
- Patient Handouts

Health department staff meet with community partners and key stakeholders to pass along program changes and to keep the training current. This is especially critical when there is employee turnover and new staff are identified for operations responsibilities. On-going participation in training and plan updates has led to additional positive interactions with coalitions in the local communities. There is on-going collaboration of the OSDH, Oklahoma City-County Health Department, and the Tulsa Health Department to keep the push partner program effective and robust as possible.

CONCLUSION

In 2006, Oklahoma had only 20 push partners, but by the end of 2011, there were more than 300 push partners. The Push Partner Program continues to gain popularity with communities that have a need for a closed POD. Oklahoma’s Push Partner Program not only emphasizes the benefits of the program but the critical need for a significant amount of training for our partners to be successful. This program offers the additional benefit for achieving a common goal with community members and strengthening collaborations with the private sector and other organizations. This program, when utilized effectively and managed responsibly, can save many lives and be a great multiplier of your work force during an emergency.