

Suggested Action Steps for Local Boards of Health

The following list may be helpful to you as you consider what steps to take after the March 30, 2004 satellite broadcast. The list consists of suggested ACTION ITEMS to help you take steps towards preparing for public health emergencies—including situations when isolation or quarantine might be warranted. Two themes underlie these suggestions: (1) that negative impacts of emergencies can be significantly reduced if plans are in place *before* a crisis begins; and (2) that getting to know key people in the community *before a crisis* is critical to a successful and efficient response to an emergency. Additionally, you may contact your Regional Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and Health Educator for assistance.

Basic Information

- Review roles and responsibilities of your health department in a range of emergencies.
- Review your CEMP (Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan) and know where it is located.
- Create a Public Health All Hazard Plan and attach it to your CEMP
- Identify sources for PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and how and when to use it.
- Assess health department staff training needs regarding incident command.
- Develop a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
- Develop Mass Immunization Plans (EDS PLANS)
- Develop lists of medical volunteers or join a Medical Reserve Corps

Communication

- Establish an emergency contact list for your health department. Make this list available to appropriate officials in other city or town departments or agencies, including instructions for when it should be used (what constitutes an emergency, or who to call for different kinds of emergencies). Include a 24/7 pager or cell phone that is always answered. If your town does not have this capacity, consider establishing a shared system through a memorandum of understanding with a neighboring town or through the Emergency Preparedness region to which your town belongs.
- Make sure all board of health members and health department employees know how to use all equipment, such as computer, fax, beepers, walkie-talkies, etc.
- Learn how the emergency dispatching system works in your town (including reverse 911 if available), and make sure the dispatcher has the emergency contact numbers and protocols for the health department, including what types of situations would require that the health department or board of health be notified.
- Establish a contact list of local and state departments and agencies that you may need to contact in specific situations. Be sure this list includes full 24/7 contact information for: police chief, emergency management director, a court magistrate, mayor/town manager/ head of select board, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization, and other key individuals. Include MASS Highway District Officials if appropriate.
- Learn the procedure for contacting Town Council and a magistrate 24/7 in order to request a mandatory isolation or quarantine order.
- Develop a risk communication plan. Identify who will be designated spokesperson. Coordinate with local hospitals, doctors, other Health Departments and Emergency Managers so there is one voice.
- Establish a database of local skilled nursing facilities, daycare facilities, schools, colleges, and other congregate living facilities. Establish protocols regarding when and how to contact such groups.

- Establish a list of local elderly, frail, disabled, and other people who may need special assistance in case of emergency. Note: this list may already exist and be available from your LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee).

Roles of Municipal Departments and LEPC

- Meet with the local police, fire and public works departments, EMS (Emergency Medical Service) providers, and city/town officials to discuss the roles of the health department in responding to public health emergencies.
- If the health department is not already represented on the LEPC and your Regional Coalition for Public Health Preparedness, make arrangements to join. If your town does not have an active LEPC, contact the emergency preparedness coordinator in your region for assistance in starting an LEPC.
- Work with other municipal agencies—police, fire, EMS, and public works—to assist them in identifying training needs and protocols so they will be prepared to fulfill their role in a public health emergency (e.g., isolation, quarantine, mass immunization, and others).
- Work with schools, hospitals, physicians, pharmacists, medical examiners, judges and other groups to develop emergency plans.
- Work with Animal Inspectors and Animal Control Officers and other interest parties to develop emergency plans for animals.

Isolation and Quarantine

- Review laws and regulations that pertain to isolation and quarantine. Consider the differences between small scale and large scale isolation and quarantine needs.
- Examine what level of preparations for isolation and quarantine are appropriate for your city or town—some may pass regulations, while others may draft standard operating procedures (SOPs). These may be modeled after existing regulations or SOPs from other cities or towns. The attendee binder for the March 30, 2004 Satellite Training Broadcast on Isolation and Quarantine contains a number of resources to help get you started.
- Schedule meetings to discuss isolation and quarantine with the police and fire chiefs, municipal attorney, and mayor/ town manager/selectboard. The agenda could include: a review of the laws governing isolation and quarantine; enforcement issues; and roles of each municipal department. In preparing for the meeting, be sure you are comfortable with the material, and invite others to help you prepare or to join you in the meeting.
- Meet with neighboring communities to address questions relating to transporting a patient across town/state lines.
- Meet with local hospitals, clinics, and private practitioners to review your isolation and quarantine plan and clarify roles and communication expectations during emergencies.
- Familiarize yourself with documents that can assist you in local preparedness efforts, including:
 - Supplement A of the CDC document Public Health Guidance for Community-Level Preparedness and Response to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), available at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/guidance/A/index.htm>
 - The MDPH Infectious Disease Emergency Plan (IDEP) template, available online at www.mass.gov/dph/topics/bioterrorism/BT.htm