

# **FAITH-BASED & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST**

The collaboration of Faith-Based and Community Organizations with public health agencies will be essential in protecting the public's health and safety if and when an influenza pandemic occurs. This checklist provides guidance for religious or organizations (churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, etc.), social service agencies that are faith-based, and community organizations in developing and improving influenza pandemic response and preparedness plans. Many of the points suggested here can improve your organization's ability to protect your community during emergencies in general. You can find more information at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

## **Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your organization and its mission:**

- Assign key staff with the authority to develop, maintain, and act upon an influenza pandemic preparedness and response plan.
- Determine the potential impact of a pandemic on your organization's usual activities and services. Plan for situations likely to require increasing, decreasing, or altering the services your organization delivers.
- Determine the potential impact of a pandemic on outside resources that your organization depends on to deliver its services (e.g., supplies, travel, etc.)
- Outline what the organizational structure will be during an emergency and revise periodically. The outline should identify key contacts with multiple check-ups, role and responsibilities, and who is supposed to report to whom.
- Identify and train essential staff (including full time, part-time and unpaid or volunteer staff) needed to carry on your organization's work during a pandemic. Include back up plans, cross-training staff in other jobs so that if staff are sick, others are ready to come in to carry on the work.
- Test your response and preparedness plan using an exercise or drill, and review and revise your plan as needed.

## **Communicate with and educate your staff, members, and persons in the communities that you serve:**

- Find up-to-date, reliable pandemic information and other public health advisories from state and local health departments, emergency management agencies, and CDC.
- Make this information available to your organization and others.
- Distribute materials with basic information about pandemic influenza: signs and symptoms, how it is spread, ways to protect yourself and your family (e.g., respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette), family preparedness plans, and how to care for ill persons at home.
- When appropriate, include basic information about pandemic influenza in public meetings (e.g. sermons, classes, trainings, and group meetings and announcements).
- Share information about your pandemic preparedness and response plan with staff, members, and persons in the community that you serve.

- Develop tools to communicate information about pandemic status and your organization's actions. This might include websites, flyers, local newspaper announcements, pre-recorded widely distributed phone messages, etc.
- Consider your organization's unique contribution to addressing rumors, misinformation, fear and anxiety. Advise staff members, and persons in the communities you serve to follow information provided by public health authorities, state and local health departments, emergency management agencies, and the CDC.
- Ensure that what you communicate is appropriate for the cultures, languages and reading levels of your staff; members, and persons in the communities that you serve.

### **Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your staff, members, and the communities that you serve:**

- Plan for staff absences during a pandemic due to personal and/or family illnesses, quarantines, and school business, and public transportation closures. Staff may include full-time, part-time and volunteer personnel.
- Work with local health authorities to encourage yearly influenza vaccination for staff members, and persons in the communities that you serve.
- Evaluate access to mental health and social services during a pandemic for your staff, members, and persons in the communities that you serve; improve access to these services as needed.
- Identify persons with special needs (e.g. elderly, disabled, limited English speakers) and be sure to include their needs in your response and preparedness plan. Establish relationships with them in advance so they will expect and trust your presence during a crisis.

### **Set up policies to follow during a pandemic:**

- Set up policies for non-penalized staff leave for personal illness or care for sick family members during a pandemic.
- Set up mandatory sick-leave policies for staff suspected to be ill, or who become ill at the worksite.
- Employees should remain at home until their symptoms resolve and they are physically ready to return to duty (Know how to check up-to-date CDC recommendations).
- Set up policies for flexible work hours and working from home. . Evaluate your organization's usual activities and services (including rites and religious practices if applicable) to identify those that may facilitate virus spread from person to person.
- Set up policies to modify these activities to prevent the spread of pandemic influenza (e.g. guidance for respirator's hygiene and cough etiquette, and instructions for persons with influenza symptoms to stay home rather than visit in person.)
- Follow CDC travel recommendations during an influenza pandemic. Recommendations may include restricting travel to affected domestic and international sites, recalling non-essential staff working in or near an affected site when an outbreak begins, and distributing health information to persons who are

returning from affected areas.

- Set procedures for activating your organization's response plan when an influenza pandemic is declared by public health authorities and altering your organization's operations accordingly.

### **Allocate resources to protect your staff; members, and persons in the communities that you serve during a pandemic:**

- Determine the amount of supplies needed to promote respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette and how they will be obtained.
- Consider focusing your organization's efforts during a pandemic to providing services that are most needed during the emergency (e.g. mental/spiritual health or social services).

### **Coordinate with external organizations and help your community:**

- Understand the rules of federal, state, and local public health agencies and emergency responders and what to expect and what not to expect from each in the event of a pandemic.
- Work with local and/or state public health agencies, emergency responders, local healthcare facilities, and insurers to understand their plans and what they can provide, share about your preparedness and response plan and what your organization is able to contribute, and take part in their planning. Assign a point of contact to maximize communication between your organization and your state and local public health systems.
- Coordinate with emergency responders and local healthcare facilities to improve availability of medical advice and timely/urgent healthcare services and treatment for your staff, members, and persons in the communities that you serve.
- Share what you've learned from developing your preparedness and response plan with other Faith-Based and Community Organizations to improve community response efforts.
- Work together with other Faith-Based and Community Organizations in your local area and through networks (e.g. denominations, associations, etc.) to help your communities prepare for pandemic influenza.