

Partnering With Southwest Utah Public Health Department



As a partner to the Southwest Utah Public Health Department, your organization plays a critical role in our community’s public health preparedness activities. Your willingness to operate a closed point of dispensing or **Closed POD** during an emergency for your employees and their family members, and to assist our community, demonstrates your organization’s commitment to the national preparedness initiative. The Southwest Utah Public Health Department will match your commitment with equal dedication by providing the necessary technical assistance, planning tools and resources to help you develop your **Closed POD** plan.

Imagine This Scenario . . .

Whether by accident or as part of a terrorist attack, a biological agent such as anthrax has been released and thousands are 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 Center for Disease Control (CDC) delivers supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) destined for local public health agencies. These life-saving medications are delivered to the local public health official. Southwest Utah Public Health Department has activated long-standing and well-rehearsed mass prophylaxis plans via “pull and push” methods of dispensing. Most likely given this scenario, the 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 churches, schools, community centers, fire stations, or other public buildings and are most often referred to as open Point Of Dispensings (PODs). But, even with extensive preparation there are long lines at every POD site as thousands of people wait in line for their pills. 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, if everyone in our jurisdiction may have been exposed to anthrax, local health departments will have to provide the necessary medication to the entire population in less than 48 hours.

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.

The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS)

- 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

If this type of scenario were to ever occur, public health officials must be ready to respond.

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To help meet this 48-hour timeframe, Southwest Utah Public Health Department is working with various organizations within the 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. Your **Closed POD** is an example of a push method of dispensing.

II. Setting Expectations – What Can You Expect?

Current Planning Efforts

Southwest Utah Public Health has created plans which identify sites and resources that can support POD operations during a public health emergency. Each site has been evaluated to ensure that it is appropriate for such use, facility use agreements have been developed and signed and plans have been made for all aspects of establishing the POD, including:

- Communicating with the public
- Communicating with emergency responders (police, fire and EMS)
- Transporting medicines and supplies to each site
- Floor plans and client flow patterns for dispensing at each site
- Security and safety precautions
- Staffing needs including medical professionals and volunteers
- Necessary supplies

How Closed PODs Fit into Mass Prophylaxis

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 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.

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By partnering with Southwest Utah Public Health and operating a **Closed POD**, your staff and their family members and, in some situations, clients will receive medications at your facility which reduces their likelihood of having to visit the open PODs. This will provide peace of mind during this crisis because they know that their employer, organization or association 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 such an emergency.

Operating a **Closed POD** will ultimately help organizations with their continuity of operations plans by aiding them in becoming more resilient during and after an emergency. Employees will be able to return to their normal duties within the organization more quickly, or continue to assist public health officials through volunteering.

Closed PODs provide:

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

III. Establishing Responsibilities

Public Health Responsibilities

The Southwest Utah Public Health Department will work closely with your organization to ensure that you have the necessary information and resources to establish a **Closed POD**. As with all preparedness activities, the more we communicate and exercise our response plans now, the better we will respond if an emergency occurs. You may want to review the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed between your organization and Southwest Utah Public Health Department which also delineate expected roles and responsibilities.

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Health Department Responsibilities:

- Provide pre-event planning and technical assistance, including but not limited to policies, procedures, job aids if requested, such as example POD layouts, fact sheets, dispensing algorithms, forms, and other information necessary to successfully operate a **Closed POD**. The fact sheets, dispensing algorithms, forms etc will be picked up at the just-in-time training provided by Southwest Utah Public Health immediately following the disease emergency declaration.
- Provide pre-event **Closed POD** training/education opportunities to identify staff in your organization. Southwest Utah Public Health will gladly come to assist in the training and education. If needed please contact us at 435-986-2579 to schedule a time.
- Provide medication and forms during an emergency.
- Provide 24-hour emergency contact information to the Southwest Utah Public Health Department.
- Provide your organization with technical assistance and oversight, as needed, to effectively run a **Closed POD** during a public health emergency.
- Notify your organization of the need to activate your **Closed POD** plan.
- Provide media guidance during a public health emergency to ensure consistency of messages between their designated dispensing population and the general public.
- Collect any unused medications as well as copies of all medical documentation after the dispensing process has been completed and the **Closed POD** has been deactivated.

The challenge for government officials, working with the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and individual citizens, is to determine the best way to build capabilities for bolstering preparedness...the “best way” will vary across the Nation.

National Preparedness Guidelines

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Your Organization's Responsibilities

The Southwest Utah Public Health Department 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.

Partner Organization's Responsibilities:

- Designate staff to work with the Health Department 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 a copy and periodic updates to the Southwest Utah Public Health Department.
- Identify **Closed POD** locations for your organization.
- Maintain the necessary supplies and equipment needed to operate a **Closed POD**.
- Dispense medications following protocols and guidance provided by the Southwest Utah Public Health Department.
- Participate in training and exercise opportunities in coordination and collaboration with the Southwest Utah Public Health Department.

“Our partnership with public health, like our partnerships with other community efforts, is another way we feel connected to the communities we live in”

*Stasha Wyskiel, Manager
Business Continuity Planning, Gap Inc*

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IV. Understanding the Dispensing Process

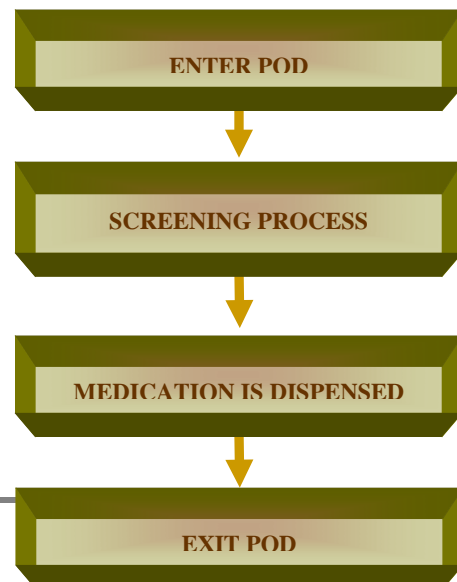
Developing a plan to dispense medication to a large number of people, at first glance, appears to be extremely challenging, especially for non-public health professionals. Rest assured that the Southwest Utah Public Health Department understands the challenges you face and is committed to walking you through the process, step by step to help you develop a comprehensive, responsive **Closed POD** plan that not only supports your organization but supports our overall community mass dispensing efforts. The remaining information in this workbook focuses on assisting planners with understanding the dispensing process and developing **Closed POD** plans.

A recent report developed by Rand Corporation, **Recommended Infrastructure Standards for Mass Antibiotic Dispensing** addresses minimal functions that should be incorporated into mass dispensing operations during emergency operations where time is of the essence. These minimal functions include:

- **Directing** staff, their families and maybe clients through the POD
- **Deciding** which medication to dispense
- **Dispensing** the medication
- **Disseminating** information about the medication

Southwest Utah Public Health Department can assist you in training and planning for a **Closed POD** if requested. Upon receiving the training it will become apparent that the majority of the tasks involved in establishing a **Closed POD** support one of these four functions.

- a) Directing – how to get individuals to and through the POD.
 - 1) Prior to directing individuals through the POD, there are numerous pre-event planning activities to accomplish. It is important to remember that given the aerosolized release of anthrax scenario, time is the worst enemy and the medication must get into the population as soon as possible.



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- 2) Informing your employees that your organization has established a partnership with public health and will operate a **Closed POD** during an emergency, and soliciting volunteers to assist with operating the facility is one of those key initial activities.

 - 3) Defining your dispensing population – Determining how many people comprise your organization’s dispensing population sets the stage for many other planning tasks for your Closed POD, such as facility size and design; the number of staff needed to operate the facility and the amount of medication received from public health. When determining the appropriate number, in addition to employees and family members, are there others who are critical to operations that should be considered? During any emergency, public health officials realize that people are most concerned with the health, safety and protection of their loved ones. Family members will form the support structure that allows your staff to continue normal operations to the extent necessary or allowable as the community endures and recovers from a public health emergency. For this reason, we recommend that you plan to provide medications to your employee’s families as well. This is referred to as the “Head of Household” model, meaning your employees will be able to obtain enough medication from your **Closed POD** for themselves and their designated family members, as long as they are accounted for on the necessary Patient Information Tracking Forms.

 - 4) POD throughput – Directing also requires you to determine your **Closed POD** throughput which is based on your designated population, the number of dispensing staff available, your dispensing flow and the time available to dispense medication. Keep in mind that operations at your **Closed POD** fit into the larger scheme of the Southwest Utah Public Health Department’s mass dispensing campaign; therefore, it is extremely important that your organization establish a throughput that supports the time available to dispense.
 - b) Deciding – determining which medication is appropriate to dispense.
 - 1) Patient Information – Prior to receiving medication at a POD, regardless of whether it is an open or **Closed POD**, federal and state laws require certain information for each person receiving medication be completed and provided at the POD. Given the time constraints in the aerosolized release of anthrax

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scenario, the medical community understands that time is of the essence and applicable emergency powers afforded to the Governor, related to mass dispensing, will most likely be enacted. The Health Department has developed medical screening forms that support the minimal data that needs to be collected during this type of emergency. These forms must be completed and turned in at the POD prior to receiving medication. A major advantage of being a **Closed POD** is that the Health Department can make these forms available pre-event to help improve throughput goals. Participation with Community Health Emergency Response Coalition (CHERC) is a valuable training opportunity on how to function a **Closed POD**. Talk to the Southwest Utah Public Health Department liaison about when these meetings are held in your county.

- 2) Which medication is appropriate? “Medical screening” is the term that describes the process of determining which medications are appropriate for each individual given their current medical status and based on the information provided on the medical screening form. In traditional scenarios, medical screening is conducted by licensed healthcare professionals who will assess the medical screening form and any available medical history to determine the best medication. In the anthrax scenario, again, time is of the essence. The decision of which medication to provide will mostly be based on written and approved protocols which will allow decisions to be made by those without formal medical training. Your public health liaison from the Southwest Utah Public Health Department will provide the necessary algorithms, guidance and training to your **Closed POD** staff involved in the screening process to determine which medication should be dispensed at your facility . They will also ensure access to licensed medical staff if necessary while your **Closed POD** is operational.
- c) Dispensing – the actual process of handing the medication over to the client.
- 1) Head of Household Policy – Up-to-date guidance is available from the Southwest Utah Public Health Department.
 - 2) Dispensing Policy – Up-to-date guidance is available from the Southwest Utah Public Health Department.

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- d) Disseminating – providing the necessary information/education forms and follow-up information.
- 1) Drug Information and Instructions – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires each person who receives medication at your **Closed POD** also receive information about the medication they are taking, dosage instructions and who to call or what to do if they experience adverse reactions to the medication. This information will be provided to you from your Southwest Public Health liaison.
 - 2) Other Important Information – It is important to provide accurate and complete information to your staff. Let your staff know why and how the **Closed POD** would be established, and how the medication dispensing process will work. This will provide your staff with confidence in the overall approach, and is an opportunity to present accurate and reassuring information before and during the emergency. In addition to information about the medication, the following topics should be addressed in the information/education process:
 - Possible threatening agents - In a public health emergency it is very important that people are informed of the true nature of the threat. They need to know the answers to questions like:
 - How do I know if I've been exposed?
 - What are the symptoms?
 - Is the disease contagious? If so, what do I need to do to protect myself and my family?
 - What are the long-term implications?

Your Southwest Utah Public Health liaison will explain how this information will also be part of the Southwest Utah Public Health Department's public information campaign. They will also provide fact sheets about anthrax to disseminate.

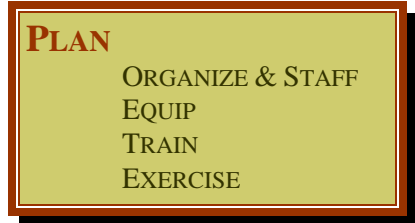
V. Developing a Closed POD Plan

Now that you have a common understanding of point of dispensing operations, it is time to develop your **Closed POD** plan. Your organization is most likely already engaged in continuity planning to ensure it is prepared for disruptive events. It is likely you will have to activate various aspects of your continuity plan when you establish your **Closed POD**. The following information will provide key planning considerations to develop actionable items to help you with this process. These action items can be transferred to the **Closed POD** Planning.

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- a) Protect Your Assets — Prepare your staff – Identify those within your organization who will assist with the planning and preparation process and involve them early.



- 1) Appoint a planning committee – Consider including human resource personnel, continuity managers, medical advisors, logistics specialists, security staff and your local public health liaison.
- 2) Determine your dispensing population – Decide whether you will accommodate employee’s families in your preparedness effort, and identify beforehand how you will define household, dependents or family. Then determine how many total individuals will be served so that you’ll be able to estimate the amount of medication needed at the time of a public health emergency. In some instances and depending on the type of organization, you may want to include contractors or clients in your dispensing population.
- b) Gather equipment needed- Identify and equip an area appropriate for dispensing the medication.
- c) Train staff- contact Southwest Utah Public Health if you need assistance in training your staff for the dispensing of medication according to the closed POD MOU.
- d) Exercise- Practice setting up and running through the activation of your closed POD plan.

Southwest Utah Public Health appreciates partners like you engaged in the preparedness effort. Please contact the Preparedness Division for questions, comments or if you need assistance in any way.

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