

Public Information and Communication Challenges: Message Development for Mobilizing the Public for Mass Prophylaxis

In this section we provide an overview of mass-dispensing message considerations developed by an expert panel of PIC and mass dispensing professionals that met in Atlanta in April of 2004. It is not meant to be a comprehensive checklist, but it does provide a good overview of the special considerations for PIC activities to support mass dispensing activities.

It is CRITICAL that you recognize your responsibility for making mass-dispensing operational information available to the PIC professionals who will be communicating it to the public. Some examples of such operational information are noted in RED, but they are not meant to represent all possible considerations.

The Communications Channels/Tools:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• News release• Web sites (Agency/Partners/Media)• Talking points• FAQs• Special needs communication• PSA – public service announcements• HAN – Health Alert Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Print ads• Press conferences• BlastFax• 24/7 telephone hotlines• Reverse 911 notification system• Flyers• Push Cards
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Message Focus:

Let the public know that the SNS assets have been requested and will be arriving.

What is needed: Basic information about the SNS assets

Information to include in messages:

- The SNS assets are federal assets to augment local supplies.
- The DSNS is on its way.
- Medicines from the DSNS are free.
- There will be ample supplies for all affected populations.
- Locations for local dispensing sites – announced before PODs open (set approx. time to announce).
- The 24/7 telephone hotline number.
- If you are sick – go to hospital.
- If you are well – public health message about appropriate course of action.
- Information as available – option to schedule news conference, if appropriate.

Message Focus:

Reinforce public health information messages.

What is needed: Provide consistent messages about the evolving situation.

Information to include in messages:

- Be sure to include empathy messages at the beginning of messages.
- Explain that there is an outbreak taking place.

- If you are ill – go to hospital.
- If you are well – public health message about appropriate course of action.
- Activate 24/7 telephone hotline and notify the public how to call and what information is available.

Message Focus:

Prepare the public to receive medication.

What is needed: Prepare messages in anticipation of press conferences and activate plans to print/publish clinic forms in newspapers, on the Web, by flyers or other means.

Information to include in messages:

- How to obtain clinic forms prior to arriving at POD.
- Instructions to:
 - Be prepared with a list of medications and allergies for yourself and all family members.
 - Record your children's weight(s) and bring to the clinic. What to do if you don't know weight.
- Explanation to public why they need to provide information requested.
- Contraindications – information to tell health care professional if you have a medical condition.
- Restrictions at the PODs (i.e., NO pets, animals, firearms/weapons, etc.).
- Explain the family distribution policy and how families will get medicine for all members.
- Reinforce public health messages about the symptoms of disease.
- Self assessment tool - Information for the public so they can assess symptoms they may have.
- What to do if you are symptomatic or ill – go to hospital or defined intake area.
- Instructions for the homebound/institutionalized.
- Policies for undocumented workers, including identification requirements.
- Information discouraging hoarding and illegal sale of medication (i.e., there are ample supplies, etc.).

Message Focus:

Prepare the public going to the PODs (Points of Dispensing/Dispensing Clinics).

Address POD procedures and expectations.

What is needed:

- Messages to the public before arriving at POD; Consider PSA about expected traffic for each location as well as inside clinics.
- Messages to the public when they arrive at POD.
 - Either avoid complex terms or explain terminology clearly.
 - Provide traffic flow map to help the public anticipate what to expect and what is expected of them.
 - Identify stations inside clinics (traffic flow overview).
 - Explain that the public should be prepared for possible delays.
 - Let the public know there will be staff at the POD to help them (greeters, crisis counselors, etc.).

What is needed:

- Messages to the public about taking medication:
 - To take full course of antibiotic treatment prescribed and how long that will be.
 - To be aware that they may need to return for additional quantities of medication.
 - To know information about pre-existing medical conditions because of possible contraindications.
 - To be aware of adverse affects they may experience and what to do if they experience them.
 - To pay close attention to children's dosages (liquid dosage forms).
 - To follow-up with private health care provider or clinic.
 - Explanations for why others may get different medication for same outbreak.
 - Do not give medication to your pets. Contact your veterinarian for guidance.

Message Focus:

Messages specific to the PODs in the community. Anticipate questions; address expectations.

What is needed:

- Messages crafted to anticipate questions, address expectations, educate, and inform.

Messages identifying PODs/clinics/site logistics:

- *Site locations*
- *Clinic times*
- *Directions to clinics*
- *Parking*
- *Signs before the parking lot*
- *Flow rate, off peak times*

Messages at the PODs:

- Use universal signage.
- Repeat that staff will be there to assist.
- Explain how to visually identify the assisting staff.
- Explain what to expect when you arrive.
- Confirm why “It’s worth the wait.”
- Repeat what to bring, what not to bring.
- Emphasize that there will be enough medication for everyone.
- Announce public transportation available and any special transport arrangements to PODs.
- Remind everyone: if you are sick, report to the hospital.
- Repeat public health messages.
- Prepare messages to educate and help POD staff interact with the public with empathy, caring, and concern.
- (As a backup) Prepare talking points about those who have been treated first.
- (As event continues) Prepare reports and interviews about experiences of those who have been through PODs.

Messages about Transportation Options:

- Public Transportation (where available).
- Parking issues.
- Repeat family dispensing policy.
- Traffic reports.
- Watch/follow traffic signs.
- Pay attention to law enforcement directions.
- Special needs transportation (if applicable).
- Shuttles (if applicable).
- Additional applicable communication tools:
 - Traffic Signs,
 - Traffic reporters,
 - Low power radio transmitters, and
 - Megaphones.

Message Focus:

Messages with updated information about the PODs.

- *Flow updates/status report* ⇔ *Numbers, numbers, numbers!* Statistics will be needed for community leaders to report back to the public about mass dispensing efforts. Be sure to include mechanism to accomplish this and provide accurate statistics.
- Update the public about
 - Emerging issues and
 - Logistical challenges and changes.
- Continue to provide messages expressing empathy and providing reassurance. (More is better.)
- Repeat and reinforce public health messages.

Message Focus:

Medication adherence.

The adherence message must:

- Be repeated and repeated and repeated.
- Have its rationale (e.g., “You will experience side effects”) and importance (e.g., “You may get ill and die.”) explained and explained and explained.
- Include a safety valve (i.e., a staffed 24/7 multi-line telephone number that people are urged to call before, and rather than, discontinuing their treatment or neglecting to come for follow-up regimens.
- Be a strategic communications campaign designed to influence the medicine-taking behavior of the entire public, up to 60 days for an anthrax attack.

Message Focus:

Recruiting/processing volunteers

Pre-event

- How to reach potential volunteers to recruit
 - Health care professionals and
 - Non-health care professionals.
- Maintaining communication with volunteers.
- Volunteer training issues.

At time of event (“just in time” volunteers who want to help)

- Where to go.
- What to expect.
 - Procedures to volunteer
 - Time to process
 - Credentialing process
 - Time commitment
- What skills are needed.
 - Health care professionals
 - Non-health care professionals

Considerations for your special-needs audiences:

Plan for those who:		
<p>Can't/Won't RECEIVE your message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blind and visually impaired • Deaf and hearing impaired • Physically disabled • Tourists • Transients • Migrant workers • Isolated recreationalists • Isolated elderly • Homeless 	<p>Can't/Won't UNDERSTAND your message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illiterate • Language barriers • Migrant workers • Mentally disabled • Caretaker minors 	<p>Can't/Won't ACT ON your message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undocumented workers • Isolated elderly • Homeless • Religious restrictions • Cultural restrictions • Tourists • Displaced residents • Geographically isolated persons

Channels and tools to consider when trying to reach your special needs audiences.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translated broadcast materials • Reverse 911 (if available) • AMBER Alert • VHF/HAM Radios • Meals on Wheels • TTY • AT&T Language lines • Websites • Bullhorns/loudspeakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HAN – Health Alert Network • Targeted media – (billboards, bus boards) • WIC Programs • Senior Centers • Public Transportation • Day Care Centers • Hotlines • Emergency Management Offices • Border Control

These groups represent audiences to serve as a communication channels to reach special populations:

- Trusted leaders
- Hotels/tourism industry
- Educational institutions (if open)
- Churches/civic organizations
- Soup kitchens/homeless shelters
- Mental health clinicians/associations
- Employers
- Law enforcement/first responders
- Citizen Corps
- Neighborhood Watch
- Local governments
- Council on Aging
- Housing authorities
- Community businesses
- Native help organizations
- Tribal councils
- Parks Department
- Healthcare providers
- Pharmacists

Considerations for PIC at a Point of Dispensing:

The insights from the workgroup that focused on communications activities inside the POD are summarized below. Although the messages inside the PODs will be the same as those that public receive outside of the POD, there are unique considerations for public information and communications at a POD.

It is important to consider these implications when planning for managing parking, traffic flow, triage, forms management and dispensing strategies. All of these processes present logistical challenges where success or failure can hinge on providing basic information to the public about how the POD will operate, what they need to do, and what will be expected of them. And of course, continually informing and educating the public about the outbreak event, health considerations, and medication adherence will be essential throughout the process.

Function	Communication Objective	Communication Content	Tool	Who can do it?
Security	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimize security problems 2. Reassurance (regarding both safety of site and dangers to health at site) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What (not) to bring to POD 2. Security is provided 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Airwaves 2. Signs 3. Personal/spoken word 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mass media 2. Law enforcement 3. Volunteers
Traffic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expedite getting people from parking lot to mass transport 2. Reassurance and increase credibility 3. Increase access to "product" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address of POD 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Airwaves 2. Signs 3. POD staff: verbal commands, pointing, and providing directions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law enforcement 2. Volunteers
Parking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate parking 2. Facilitate assistance for persons with special need 3. Get people to front door of POD 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear directions about where to park and how to get there 2. Clear directions to front door of POD 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signs 2. Cones, French barricades 3. POD staff: verbal commands, pointing, and providing directions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law enforcement 2. Volunteers
Front Door/Triage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate screening at entry point 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify persons exposed to agent 2. Identify those who are symptomatic 3. Identify special needs populations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signs 2. Cones French barricades 3. POD staff: verbal commands, pointing, and providing directions 	Medically trained personnel

2. Facilitate distribution of information and forms packet (includes FAQ sheet, Pt. Info and consent sheet, F/U Info, etc.)

1. Location of packets
2. "Start Here" Signage
3. Instructions for filling out the packet

1. Signs
2. People (Registrars)

Medically trained personnel

Considerations for PIC at a Point of Dispensing (cont.):

Function	Communication Objective	Communication Content	Tool	Who can do it?
Briefing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase comprehension Increase medication adherence Increase patient flow Decrease questions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Update about event: agent, symptoms, disease <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Outbreak Disease Drugs Mental Health 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Signs POD Staff Video 	"Briefers" <ol style="list-style-type: none"> PIO Communication specialists
Line Workers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure form completeness Increase patient flow Increase awareness of contraindications 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Instructions Examples of complete forms Large posters of pills and tables of drug names 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Signs POD Staff 	Volunteer Staff
Screening	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure form completeness Decision point: Express vs. Non-express dispensing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Flow directions Large posters of pills and tables of drug names 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Signs Arrows 	Volunteer Staff
Dispensing				
Express	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Give correct medication to the right person 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Adherence instructions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Directional Signs with Arrows Printed handouts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pharm tech RN Pharm D MD
Standard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Give the correct medication to the right person Individual patient care 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Copy of pill pictures and drug names Medication adherence instructions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Directional Signs with Arrows Printed handouts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pharm D MD
Exit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure collection of forms Ensure questions answered Reinforce follow-up instructions Evaluation (optional) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reminder about form drop-off Reminder (with pictures) about medication adherence Evaluation form 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Signs POD staff/volunteers 	Volunteer Staff