

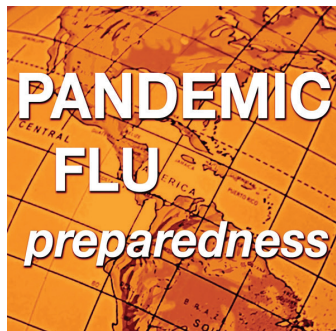


Business Planning Checklist to Prepare Family Medicine Offices for Pandemic Influenza

ASSUMPTION: At the peak of an influenza pandemic, various factors (e.g., personal and family illness, public transportation difficulties, school closures, fear of exposure, etc.) will likely result in staff absenteeism rates as high as 40 percent. Periods of active illness are expected to occur in repeated waves, each lasting as long as six to eight weeks.

General

- Identify all essential functions of the practice, including the administrative support activities necessary to continue those functions. For example, clinical patient care would include emotional support for family members, as well as for the “worried well.” (Note: The steps in this document may be used to outline the management of personnel, space, equipment, supplies, finances, and communication required to support patient care.)
- Develop a plan that takes all those essential functions into consideration. (See the “Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist” at www.flu.gov/planning-preparedness/business/businesschecklist.pdf for more information.)



Personnel Management

- Establish nonpunitive policies for compensation related to sick leave during a pandemic.
- Establish guidelines for the use of sick leave during a pandemic, including steps for determining when previously ill employees can be considered no longer infectious and can be allowed to return to work.
- Minimize staff exposure to infection by establishing flexible work hours for functions that are nonessential or do not involve patient care.
- Cross-train personnel in essential business, office, and nursing functions.

- Identify and prepare workers who can substitute for absent personnel. Consider using part-time workers, medical assistants, retirees, family members, students, etc.
- Develop connections with other primary care providers and practices for cross-coverage. Consider issues of call, emergency room and hospital coverage, public health clinics, consolidating practices, etc.
- Family physicians may consider keeping on hand an adequate supply of antivirals to prevent the spread of the virus among staff during the first pandemic wave, and until a pandemic-specific vaccine becomes available.

Management of Space, Equipment, and Supplies

- Plan the organization of entrance areas and waiting and examination rooms to maximize infection-control capabilities, with a goal of decreasing face-to-face contact between patients and staff.
- Contact suppliers of special equipment and supplies to confirm availability and ordering dates.
- Arrange for adequate storage space for additional equipment and supplies.
- Contact cleaning staff and representatives from the practice’s dangerous waste disposal service regarding an increased need for cleaning services, and projected increase in the volume of waste.
- Provide education about correct cleaning techniques for office equipment and common work areas (e.g., phones, computers, desktops, copy, fax machines, etc.).
- Cover office keyboards with washable, flexible plastic forms.

Management of Finances

- ❑ Review the financial status of the practice and project the impact that a loss of ability to see patients or collect payments would have on the business.
- ❑ Initiate discussions with health plans, health insurers, and similar organizations regarding the implications of a pandemic, with a goal of forecasting such an event's impact on billing procedures, cash flow, and payments, and determine how to diminish any negative effects.
- ❑ Contact insurers, banks, and other such institutions to discuss their plans for handling transactions during a pandemic, and any impact those changes might have on the practice.
- ❑ Consider alternative methods of distributing staff salaries during peak pandemic periods.

Communication and Community Issues

- ❑ Establish emergency communication protocols among office, medical, and nursing personnel.
- ❑ Assign cross-trained personnel to keep abreast of public and health professional announcements from local, state, and civil defense agencies, and share these with staff.
- ❑ Make yourself available to community groups to participate in planning exercises and to help increase public awareness.
- ❑ Regularly monitor the American Academy of Family Physicians' (AAFP's) pandemic influenza web resources at www.aafp.org/disasterprep/pandemicflu.html for preparedness information, including key links to national and international websites.



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