

Checklist

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY PLANNING

In the event of a pandemic influenza or other public health emergency, faith-based communities come together to help plan and provide for the emotional and supportive needs of their communities. The following information describes the roles and partnering strategies that will be beneficial for supporting the mental health needs of congregational and community families.

Plan and Prepare

- Plan for congregation, staff, and community.
- Plan for your own family.
- Use Center for Disease Control (CDC) checklists to plan for congregation.
- Learn about the emotional and physical impact that a pandemic flu may have on your congregation through classes on Psychological First Aid and through websites such as CDC, Dept. of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS).
- Learn risk communications and how to convey important, brief messages to congregational members.
- Decide how to communicate your congregation's plans and pandemic flu information to congregants.
- Plan for staff absences due to illness, how staff will be supported and who will support the congregation in their absence.
- Evaluate access to mental health and social services for members, staff, and community including Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and/or insurance, if available.
- Identify persons within your congregation who have special needs and determine with them how to meet their needs during a public health emergency.
- Consider how to protect staff and others who will be contacting people that are ill.
- Consider directing outreach efforts to services most needed during an emergency such as mental and spiritual health and social services.
- Utilize call down lists to check on members of the congregation.
- Develop "Shepherding Ministry". Families/individuals are trained to call and check on congregants (especially home-bound, elderly and special needs) several times a month. Consider increasing number of calls during a pandemic, having back-up callers, etc.
- If congregation is unable to meet for services, consider how to telecast services.
- Introduce regular emails, letters, etc. in order to support people.
- Plan for physical support of members including volunteer delivery of medications, groceries, and meals.
- Plan for yourself—remember that self-care is critical to your ability to care for your family and congregation. Develop a support system, private times and relaxation times.

Develop Partnerships

- Call the Local Public Health Agency (LPHA) to see if there are groups/congregations meeting to plan for a public health emergency. Become part of those groups.
- Discuss and plan with Ecumenical groups such as the Ministerial Alliance.
- Consider developing a Local Emergency Pastoral Care Committee.
- Partner with other faith-based and community agencies such as mental health, health, social services, and volunteer agencies to plan for how to meet specific needs.
- Develop planning with other organizations of your faith to provide mutual support, staffing, etc.

- Identify resources available through your congregational affiliation: counseling centers, parish nurses, etc.
- Develop letters of understanding outlining the agreed upon activities and outreach between partnering faith-based organizations/congregations.
- Understand the roles of federal, state, and local public health agencies as well as emergency responders and what to expect during an emergency in terms of support for your congregation.
- Plan with partners such as other congregations, funeral homes, and healthcare providers about how to handle mass fatalities, memorials, etc.
- If you are a member of a faith that has specific cultural practices during grief periods, or whose members may limit medical interventions due to their beliefs, work with public health authorities and diminish inappropriate responses.
- As a partnership, develop educational materials and strategies to decrease stigma for people who have been through illness and are returning to work, etc. as others may fear getting ill from them.
- If you partner with your local hospital, law enforcement, etc., as a chaplain, plan for how your response may change in a pandemic event—for example, phone calls instead of hospital visits; changes in provisions for communion and last rights; support to families who have ill family members or may have lost a family member; support to law enforcement and mortuary staff who respond when death has occurred.

DURING A PANDEMIC

Communication

- Communicate plans and early pandemic information to congregation, including resilience building and coping strategies.
- Activate telephone calling trees to communicate about ill members and specific needs.
- Implement “Shepherding Ministry.” Families/individuals keep in contact on a regular basis with sick, shut-ins, elderly, and persons with special needs.
- Publicize pastoral and spiritual care.
- Convey websites, email addresses, and telephone numbers the congregation may use to gather current information or request assistance.
- Be particularly careful that information posted is updated and accurate.
- Communicate regularly with faith-based and community partners for planning and support.

Surges in Healthcare Demand

- Develop support for members if hospitals are overwhelmed.
 - ◆ Volunteer deliveries of essential goods
 - ◆ Paying bills for ill persons
 - ◆ Child or elder care
 - ◆ Pet care
- Implement decisions regarding transportation to healthcare facilities, exposure, etc.

Partnerships

- Use partners as source of mutual emotional support by phone, generating new ideas for response.
- Implement plans made with partner agencies to provide back-up support, web-based services from other locations, etc.

For more information,
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