Invitation to Become a Private Medication Center

Supporting Public Health by Dispensing Emergency Medications to Employees & their Families
Medical Emergency: What to Expect?

Medication Centers: Enhanced Protection During Public Health Emergencies

Medication centers are locations where medications from the federal Strategic National Stockpile can be provided to affected persons during a medical emergency, such as a disease outbreak or terrorist attack. By becoming a Private Medication Center, you will receive and dispense medications from the federal stockpile directly to your employees and their families.

Employees will feel secure in knowing that their organization has taken steps to ensure they and their families will be protected during a public health emergency. This knowledge may generate an increased sense of commitment and loyalty. Operating a Private Medication Center also enhances the resiliency of your organization by reducing the need for employees to take time off work to care for their own illness or that of a family member; or to wait in long lines at Public Medication Centers. In addition, you will help minimize the impact of the emergency on the community and save lives.

The Strategic National Stockpile

The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is a federally managed supply of medications and medical supplies intended for use during emergency situations such as a bioterrorism attack or natural disaster.

Within 12 to 24 hours, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can deploy a large shipment from the SNS, known as a ‘push-pack’, anywhere in the United States or its territories, to supplement and re-supply state and local health and medical resources. After this initial shipment, additional resources items from the SNS may follow.

State and local public health agencies have plans in place to receive shipments from the SNS and distribute their contents to the community quickly and efficiently. In addition, your local health department is part of the Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI) - a federal program that helps metropolitan areas increase their capacity to rapidly deliver medicines and medical supplies during large-scale public health emergencies. The use of Private Medication Centers is just one of many dispensing strategies planned to deliver medication to 100 percent of the affected population within 48 hours of the decision to do so. Collaboration between public health, government, private industry and non-profit organizations is a crucial part of this planning effort.
What to Expect?

**SCENARIO**

Your local health department is prepared to protect citizens from the health impacts of a wide range of emergencies and disasters. A bioterror attack like the following could be one scenario where Private Medication Centers are activated.

Whether by accident or part of a terrorist attack, a biological agent such as anthrax has been released and millions of people across the nation are at risk, including those in your community. People need preventive medications immediately, so the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ships supplies from its Strategic National Stockpile to locations within Washington state.

Public health agencies activate long-standing and well rehearsed plans to dispense the medicine at public sites. But even with extensive preparation, the number of people requiring medication may overwhelm traditional dispensing sites.

As a **Private Medication Center**, you are able to activate your Private Medication Center Plan and dispense preventive medications to your employees and their families, avoiding the need for them to visit crowded public sites. With important paperwork already on file, the process is quick and easy. Your employees and their families are protected from harm and your organization keeps running smoothly, while public health agencies serve the general public.
Private vs. Public Medication Centers

Below are the two different types of medication centers:

- A PRIVATE Medication Center is a location operated by a private business, government agency, or non-profit organization. These organizations have decided to pass out emergency medications to a specific population (i.e. their employees and their families). Private Medication Centers are not open to the general public.

- A PUBLIC Medication Center is a location operated by a local public health agency or pharmacy that is open to everyone who lives or works in that community.

Each site has been evaluated to ensure that it is appropriate for such use, and plans have been developed for all aspects of the response including:

- Communicating with the public
- Communicating between emergency responders (police, fire and emergency medical services)
- Transportation of medicines and supplies to each site
- The flow pattern of dispensing at each site
- Security and safety precautions
- Staffing for the site, including professionals and volunteers
- Necessary supplies

[Diagram of the dispensing process]

A sample flow pattern at a Public Medication Center.
Protecting Employee’s Families

Your local health department and healthcare coalition are inviting your organization to become part of a growing network of large employers and businesses across the Puget Sound region that will serve as Private Medication Centers. Though there is no requirement to become a Private Medication Center, it may greatly increase buy-in and support from your employees. During any emergency, your employees are most concerned about the health, safety, and protection of their loved ones. Family members will form the support structure that allows your staff to continue working as the community endures and recovers from an emergency. For this reason, we recommend that you plan to provide medications to your employees’ families as well. Family members need not visit your office to receive medications. They can fill out a screening form at home and the employee can pick up medications for their entire family.

The exact definition of a family member is determined by you. Definitions might include anyone claiming residence at the employee’s household, those individuals identified as dependents on the employee’s tax forms or insurance coverage, or an employee plus a specified number (one, three, five, etc.) of immediate family members. Regardless of the approach you adopt, your decision should be clearly communicated to employees and included in your organization’s emergency plan.
Establishing Responsibilities

Public Health Responsibilities

Your local health department, in coordination with the local healthcare coalition, will work closely with your organization to ensure that you have the necessary information and resources to establish a Private Medication Center (PMC). As with all preparedness activities, the more we communicate and exercise our response plans now, the better we will respond if an emergency occurs.

Local Public Health Responsibilities:

♦ Provide planning and technical assistance, including but not limited to policies, procedures, and job aids such as example PMC layouts, fact sheets, dispensing algorithms, forms, and other information necessary to successfully operate a PMC

♦ Provide medication, forms, and instructions during an emergency

♦ Provide 24-hour emergency contact information for your local health department

♦ Provide your organization with technical assistance and oversight, as needed, to effectively run a PMC

♦ Notify your organization of the need to activate your PMC plan

♦ Provide media guidance during the emergency to ensure consistency of messages between your organization 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 PMC has been deactivated
Establishing Responsibilities

Your Organization’s Responsibilities

Your local Health Department will help you prepare to set up your Private Medication Center, but there are steps you must take to ensure the proper plans are in place to establish and operate a Private Medication Center (PMC) efficiently. Responsibilities include the following:

- Designate staff to work with your local health department in planning for the operation of a PMC
- Provide primary and secondary 24-hour emergency points of contact to ensure timely notification and activation of your PMC
- Develop a PMC plan and provide a copy and periodic updates to your local health department
- Identify PMC locations for your organization
- Maintain the necessary supplies and equipment needed to operate a PMC
- Dispense medications following protocols and guidance provided by your local health department
- Participate in predetermined and agreed upon training and exercise opportunities provided by your local health department
Requirements to be Eligible to Receive Medication

There are several ways organizations can access medications. Your local health department has developed criteria to determine the various ways medications will be distributed. To qualify, your organization must provide goods or services. Additional information will be provided based on the category your organization belongs to.

Ways to Access Medications
- Direct shipment to a central delivery site
- Picking up at a designated pick-up location

How to Qualify for Direct Shipment
- Have the ability to dispense medications to 1000 or more patients
- Have medical personnel with the ability to screen for medical contraindications and dispense medications to patients*
- Have the ability to receive medications at a central delivery site and distribute across your entire system.*
- Have a signed agreement with your local health department

How to Qualify for Pre-arranged Pick-up
- Have the ability to dispense medications to 100 - 1000 patients
- Can request quantities in increments of 100
- Have medical personnel with the ability to screen for medical contraindications and dispense medications to patients*
- Have a signed agreement with your local health department
- Have designated someone to pick up medications for your facility and their contact information is on file with your local health department

Identify Medical Personnel*
- In King County, to become a Private Medication Center, you will need to have medical personnel available who can legally dispense medications. Your organization may have medical personnel already on staff, or you may choose to arrange for outside medical personnel to come into your location

*Requirements vary between local health departments (e.g. Pierce County does not require PMCs to staff medical personnel). Make sure to contact your local health department for specific requirements.
Plan Development Checklist

Developing a plan to dispense medication to a large number of people at first glance appears to be extremely challenging, especially for non-health professionals. Rest assured that your local 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 Private Medication Center (PMC) plan that not only supports your organization but supports our overall community mass dispensing efforts. Your planning process will include:

□ Determining who Your Site will Serve
  ♦ Decide whether you will accommodate employees’ families
  ♦ Define the term family member (e.g. reported to the IRS, household members, etc.)
  ♦ Determine how many total staff and family members will be served to estimate the amount of medication needed

□ Appointing a Planning Committee
  ♦ Consider including human resource personnel, continuity managers, medical advisors, logistics specialists, security staff and your local public health liaison

□ Determining Staffing & Structure
  ♦ These individuals could be chosen from your PMC Committee
  ♦ Regardless of your number of PMC, each PMC must have a person in charge, who is capable of managing large numbers of people in extenuating circumstances, and should be familiar with your staff and/or members, your organization and their needs

□ Identifying a Dispensing Location & Design
  ♦ Identify a secure room that can be utilized for medication or vaccines and supplies storage
  ♦ Dispensing areas should have:
    ◊ Separate entrance and exit
    ◊ Easily identifiable by all employees
    ◊ Able to accommodate tables, chairs and large numbers of people
    ◊ Place to secure medications and supplies
    ◊ Able to accommodate people with disabilities

□ Determining Security Needs & Capabilities
  ♦ Consider your current security resources and capabilities and determine if additional security will be needed in an emergency to protect your facility and staff
Plan Development Checklist

☐ Identifying, Purchasing, and Storing Necessary Supplies
  ♦ Office supplies, tables, chairs, bags or envelopes, and medical supplies

☐ Developing Dispensing Plans & Procedures
  ♦ If you decide to become a Private Medication Center, your local health department will provide you with a step-by-step planning workbook to prepare your organization for a public health emergency

☐ Developing Communication & Messaging Systems
  ♦ Before the event, establish an awareness campaign that informs your employees of your agency’s partnership with the local health department
  ♦ Prepare activation and informational messages before an event, so that your communications coordinator may access and post messages rapidly
  ♦ Educate your employees on the plan
Interested in Becoming a PMC?

Please contact your local health department for more information on enrollment and the planning process. If you are a pharmacy and have signed the Washington Statewide Pharmacy Memorandum of Understanding, you are already enrolled.

Medical Countermeasures Points of Contact:

**King County**
Michelle Dulaney
Public Health - Seattle & King County
(206) 263-2414
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**Pierce County**
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Tacoma - Pierce County Health Department
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**Snohomish County**
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(425) 339-8612
Snohomish Health District
nfurness@shd.snohomish.wa.gov

**Kitsap County**
Jessica Guidry, MPH, CHES
Kitsap Public Health District
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**Northwest Healthcare Response Network**
Www.nwhrn.com
(206) 263-8715
Your local health department would like to thank you for taking the time to examine these materials and consider taking the first step toward become a Private Medication Center. By developing long-lasting relationships with the private sector, non-profits, and government agencies, our community will be better prepared to respond to a public health emergency.

The local health department is responsible for preparing your region for medical emergencies and disasters. We work with government agencies, private industry, non-profit organizations, and the general public to improve our capabilities and better understand roles and responsibilities.

Your partnership with the local health department in medication dispensing reflects a “community” approach to disaster preparedness. As a community partner, your participation may help prevent disease, illness, and death during a public health disaster and positively impact the social, economic and environmental factors fundamental to good health.
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How much is it going to cost?
A: During a public health disaster, an organization operating as a Private Medication Center (PMC) would receive medications from your local health department to treat all designated persons within the organization’s PMC plan free of charge. Each participating organization will have to develop a PMC plan.

Q: When would an organization be asked to activate the PMC plan and dispense medications?
A: During disease outbreaks, it is critical that we maximize the efficiency of our existing pharmacy and healthcare infrastructure to meet the medication needs of our population. However, if a public health disaster becomes a community-wide incident, your local health department may activate PMC plans and request participating organizations to stand ready to receive and dispense medications. We anticipate this would only occur during incidents that warrant a national public health emergency declaration under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act.

Q: How will we be notified during an incident?
A: Your local health department will use multiple mechanisms to notify partners. We are asking all organizations to provide main contacts who can be included into our emergency notification system. The notification system sends messages through multiple channels: text, voicemail, and e-mail. In addition, your local health department Medical Countermeasures Branch Chief will notify all partners via e-mail to join conference calls at designated times to receive briefings on the situation and instructions going forward.

Q: Who operates the Private Medication Center?
A: Occupational Health staff and employee volunteers within your organization will operate the PMC, following guidance and support tools provided by your local health department. If you do not have Occupational Health staff, you will need to contract with an agency who can provide this service.

Q: What about employees who commute long distances to and from work?
A: As a Private Medication Center, you should expect to provide medications to all employees and possibly their families. Medications should be made available to long-distance commuters, but they are NOT required to attend your PMC. It may be more convenient for these individuals to attend OPEN Medication Center near their residences. In any case, you should plan for each and every employee.

Q: What happens after dispensing operations are completed?
A: After your Private Medication Center has completed its operations, you will need to provide the following to your local health department:

- Any unused medications
- Copies of all health assessment forms
- Copies of any incident reports