

Pandemic Preparedness Quiz

What can your agency do ahead of time to make sure you continue serving the citizens, even if you have employees absent from the workplace? While this list is not all inclusive, here are some things to think about....

Do you know what your “bench strength” is?

Focus on vulnerabilities first. Identify functions that currently can only be performed by 1 or 2 people. Remember to think about areas where only a limited number of people know how to perform the function or respond if something “breaks”.

Mitigate vulnerabilities. Document ways in which the vulnerabilities can be mitigated and the tasks required to achieve this. Mitigation possibilities include cross-training among employees, divisions and agencies, documenting tasks and procedures, updating desk manuals, and identifying those processes which can be automated or suspended.

Do you know who approves what and who makes which decisions?

Identify delegations of authority. Vulnerabilities also include approvals and decisions that must be made by a particular employee in order for work to continue. Identify and document at least 3 deep backup for all decisions and approvals. Detail when the backup personnel assume authority.

If an employee is out for the day, on vacation, or sick, who fills in? How are they notified that they need to fill in?

Confirm notification procedures. Does your staff know who backs them up? Who they back up? Do staff have keys, passwords, information, direction and skills to perform those duties for which they are expected to serve as backup? Identify the communication process for how backups are notified when primary/secondary employees are not available.

Close the loop. Make sure employees know to update their out of office notifications and voice mail announcements, and that the messages refer to someone who can help. This includes avoiding referrals to employees who are also out of the office.

Do you know who should/could work from a remote location? Do they have what they need to do it? Have you tried it?

Prepare for functioning remotely. Identify employees who may work from home, or a location other than their desk, what they need in order to perform specific functions (information, dial-in instructions, connections, licenses, security, configuration, passwords, so on). Test their ability to perform these functions.

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC SAFETY

HOMELAND SECURITY STATE ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY

Do you know the type of information employees, supervisors and deputies need? How are they going to get it?

Confirm communications. Create a table of types of information, who needs it, when and how it should be delivered. This can include notifications to supervisors when an employee calls in sick, deputies knowing when policies have changed or general information. This is important for keeping the entire agency informed and essential to reducing negative aspects of the inevitable rumor mill.

If you need to reach someone, do you have their contact information?

Update contact lists. Keep a list of contact information for your employees. It should include work phone, email, blackberry, etc. Although providing home phone, personal cell phone, and personal email addresses may not be information you can require from the employee, they are important to have if possible. Make sure such information is kept secure but accessible to those who need it.

Have you identified ways to reduce the spread of flu at work?

Reduce the spread and reduce the absences. Communicate to employees how they can reduce the spread through hand washing and social distancing. Decide on when employees can travel, work from a remote location and how you can provide hand and respiratory hygiene supplies such as soap and water, alcohol-based hand sanitizer and tissues.

Are steps being taken to ensure employee awareness and preparedness?

Communicate. Employees should be made aware of the agency's overall plan. Specific duties or requirements should be explained to the employees. Rumors should be addressed with factual information.

Are there personnel policy issues that need addressed?

Identify and communicate. Are current policies concerning sick leave, vacation, pay, so on adequate? Are there issues that need resolved? Can these be done internally or do other agencies (Division of Personnel) need to be involved? Are policy issues being discussed with employees so they will understand what is expected of them or what policy and procedures may differ in a pandemic? What triggers pandemic specific policies and procedures (internal decision, action by the Governor, state health officer)?