



Mass Dispensing in Boston FACT SHEET

Boston Center for Independent Living has been providing services to people with disabilities since 1974, when it became the second independent living center in the country. BCIL empowers its members and constituents to take control over their lives and become active members of the communities in which they live. BCIL works to promote the civil rights of all people with disabilities and responds to their needs with a wide range of programs and services.

BCIL is working with the City of Boston and the Boston Public Health Commission on a number of Emergency Preparedness issues, including the mass dispensing of emergency medications in case of an outbreak or a bioterror attack. Please keep this information in a handy location in case of an emergency.

Background

Emergency planners in Boston have been working to make sure the city is prepared for a wide variety of emergencies. One of the most important of these plans is how to distribute emergency medications or vaccines to large numbers of people in a short amount of time. This is called “mass dispensing”.

What is mass dispensing?

There are several different examples of what a mass dispensing event looks like:

- The most common everyday example is a flu clinic for the public, where people go to receive influenza vaccine to protect them from getting sick during flu season.
- Another example might be a measles clinic, where people who may have been exposed during a measles outbreak are given medication to keep them from becoming ill.
- Mass dispensing would also take place during larger-scale public health emergencies where lots of people are sick at once – such as an influenza pandemic or an event of bioterrorism.

In each of these situations, people need rapid access to medications or vaccines to keep from getting sick. Mass dispensing is a way to make this happen.

Where would people go to receive emergency medications?

Emergency medications would be given out at neighborhood-based locations such as public schools or community centers, or in other pre-identified buildings depending on the size and scope of the emergency. These sites are sometimes called Emergency Dispensing Sites (EDS).

What to expect at an Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS)?

Each EDS is designed for people to receive medication or vaccines as quickly as possible, in an orderly and safe environment. Each site is operated by a group of pre-identified, pre-trained health care professionals and volunteers, who ensure that people get the medications they need to protect themselves and their families. Boston Police Officers ensure public safety at each EDS. All medications and vaccines are free, and no ID, proof of citizenship or insurance is ever required.

How will people hear about a public health emergency and where to find the closest EDS?

During a public health emergency, Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) officials would communicate on TV, radio, newspapers and the internet to provide as much information to as many people as soon as possible. BPHC would also partner with trusted community resources at the neighborhood level (like you). BPHC may ask you to help in getting the word out and mobilizing community members to come to the EDS.

How can people get involved to help us prepare for a public health emergency?

Operating each EDS requires the coordinated efforts of many people, including health care workers and volunteers from the general public. You and your neighbors in the community can help by volunteering for the Boston Medical Reserve Corps (BMRC). The Boston Medical Reserve Corps is a group of pre-identified, pre-trained individuals who can assist during a large-scale public health emergency. You do not need to have medical training to join. People can sign up and participate by calling the BMRC at (617) 534-9200 or e-mailing volunteer@bphc.org.

For more information

Please contact Evelyne Milorin at BCIL by either phone, 617-338-6665 ext. 246, or by email at emilorin@bostoncil.org.

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