



Sonoma County  
Department of Health Services  
Public Health Division

# Protecting Your Employees in Public Health Emergencies



## CLOSED Dispensing Site Workbook

# Your Employees' Health • • • Your Company's Future

**Y**ou protect your business by planning for the unexpected — anticipating events and managing situations at hand. Sonoma County Public Health takes the same approach to protecting the health and safety of our community.

In today's post-9/11 and -Katrina world, we recognize that collaboration between government and private industry is more important than ever in the areas of emergency preparedness and homeland security.

As we build this bridge of mutual communication and alliance, we're calling on you, as a local business leader, to help protect your organization, your employees and our community by making your organization a CLOSED Dispensing Site (see page 3 for a definition of a CLOSED Dispensing site).

Taking a few small steps now to prepare for future public health emergencies will not only protect your greatest asset — your employees — but also help prepare the entire community to respond effectively.

We thank you for taking the time and effort to read this workbook and learn if a CLOSED Dispensing Site is right for you and your business.

The workbook introduces a very critical component to protecting the health and safety of your business — providing you with the background and the “know-how” to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site.

The workbook will answer key questions about what it takes to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site, empowering your business to fully develop such a program jointly with Public Health.

This workbook is not a complete CLOSED Dispensing Site plan, but rather a key reference document to help you begin the planning process, working with Public Health to develop a plan that's just right for you.

We hope that this workbook will inspire and encourage you and your staff to fully develop a CLOSED Dispensing Site plan — one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and your employees during a public health emergency.

## Imagine This Scenario ...

**W**hether by accident or as 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 ships supplies from its Strategic National Stockpile to local public health agencies.

These agencies activate long-standing and well rehearsed plans to dispense the medicine at special sites. But even with extensive preparation there are long lines at every site as tens of thousands of people wait in line for their pills. People are stressed about missing work, trying to calm their children as they endure long waits, and tempers are starting to flare.

But not for you and your employees. You planned ahead, and are activating your CLOSED Dispensing Site. Your employees know that they and their families can avoid the public dispensing sites and get their medications at work. With important paperwork already on file, the process is quick and easy. Your employees and their families are protected from harm, and your business keeps running smoothly.



Volunteers wait in line at a dispensing exercise.

**T**he Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is a national supply of medications and medical supplies to be used for emergency situations such as a bioterrorism attack or natural disaster.

Within 12 to 24 hours, the U.S. 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 components such as vendor-specific products and other items from the SNS may follow.

State and local health agencies must have plans in place to receive shipments from the SNS and distribute their contents to the community quickly and efficiently. These plans help increase the health system’s capacity to deliver medicines and medical supplies during a large-scale public health emergency.



Collaboration between public health and the private sector is a crucial part of this planning effort. The use of CLOSED Dispensing Sites, discussed in detail in this workbook, is just one of many dispensing methods planned to deliver medication to 100 percent of the population within 48 hours. Contact Public Health Preparedness to learn more about planning efforts currently underway in your community. (Contact information is provided in the back of the workbook.)

## A Program Designed to Meet Your Needs ...

### Dispensing Sites: Enhanced Protection During Public Health Emergencies

Dispensing sites are fixed locations where medications from the Strategic National Stockpile can be given out to people in response to a public health threat or emergency.



An **OPEN Dispensing Site** is a location operated by a local public health agency that is open to everyone who lives or works in that community. OPEN Dispensing Sites are meant to serve the entire public.



A **CLOSED Dispensing Site** is a location that is operated by a private business for a specific population (i.e., its employees and their families). CLOSED Dispensing Sites are not open to the public.

Operating a CLOSED Dispensing Site provides your business and your employees with extra security during a public health emergency. Essentially, your business will have the means to help minimize the impact of the emergency on the community and save lives.

If your organization chooses to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site, you will have a tremendous opportunity to combat the impact of a public health threat or emergency. Together with Public Health, you will be able to address an assortment of public health issues in a ground-breaking way.

By becoming a CLOSED Dispensing Site, your business will be better protected in the event of a public health emergency. You’ll receive and dispense medications and medical supplies directly to your employees and their families. By providing the materials and support they need, your business will help to ensure the general health and well being of not just your employees, but all of those affected by the public health emergency.

... and Serve the Community

# Local Public Health: What Can You Expect?



## Current Planning Efforts

Sonoma County Public Health has created plans which identify sites and resources that can support OPEN Dispensing Sites during a public health emergency. Sites has been evaluated to ensure that they are appropriate for such use, and plans have been made for all aspects of setting up the Dispensing Site.

During a public health emergency, Public Health would need to rely on many different community partners to help provide all of the services necessary to dispense emergency medications to the population. CLOSED dispensing sites will be an important part of the process. Please refer to “Chapter 6 Appendix D: Targeted Dispensing Plans” in the pocket of this workbook for details of this process.

CLOSED dispensing sites are established under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Public Health. The MOU details roles and responsibilities, and outlines how your business would coordinate activities. A sample MOU is located in the pocket of this workbook. If your organization has completed an MOU, consider placing a copy of it in this workbook.

## OPEN Dispensing Site Locations in Sonoma County

**S**onoma County Public Health is working with school administrators and other emergency planners to establish OPEN Dispensing Sites, primarily at high schools and veteran’s halls throughout the county.





## How CLOSED Dispensing Sites Fit into Planning

CLOSED Dispensing Sites will play an important role in any situation where it is necessary to provide emergency medications to the entire population. Traditional medical providers, such as hospitals and medical clinics will likely be overwhelmed during a large-scale public health emergency. OPEN Dispensing Sites will also be highly stressed in a situation where the entire population needs to be given medications in a short time frame.

CLOSED Dispensing Sites will help relieve some of the pressure on OPEN Dispensing Sites by reaching portions of the population independently. As a result, long lines and public anxiety can be reduced and resources will be used more efficiently.

**Becoming a  
CLOSED Dispensing Site  
is your opportunity  
to play an active role  
in protecting the health  
of our community.**

CLOSED Dispensing Sites can also help businesses ensure that their employees are protected — and therefore able to continue working and/or return to work more quickly. Employees will feel secure in knowing that their company is willing to take the ‘extra step’ to ensure that they and their families are taken care of in the event of a public health emergency. As employees feel more confident in the steps your organization has taken to protect them, they will likely feel an increased sense of commitment and loyalty.

Finally, CLOSED Dispensing Sites are a highly appropriate way to reach certain special populations that might find it difficult to come to an OPEN Dispensing Site.

Ultimately, the need to serve the public during a public health emergency is great. Partnering with Sonoma County Public Health to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site is crucial in protecting the health of our citizens and enabling recovery efforts on a local, regional and global scale.

## Understanding the Screening and Dispensing Process

### Completing medical evaluations/ health assessments

One of the greatest values of a CLOSED Dispensing Site is that paperwork can be completed ahead of time for the employees who will receive the emergency medications. At an OPEN Dispensing Site, however, large numbers of people will report all at the same time, and everyone must fill out required medical evaluation and contact forms before they can receive medications.

In a CLOSED format, your organization can provide the necessary forms to employees in advance and keep them on file until they are needed. Information can be updated periodically — perhaps annually — to reflect any changes in health status. When and if an emergency occurs, the forms will be at hand to simplify the dispensing process.

Sample forms are available for duplication in the workbook pocket. You may choose to use either on-site or contracted medical personnel to oversee the medical assessment process to ensure proper health safety and privacy measures are being observed.



## Protecting employees' families

During any emergency, employees are most concerned with 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 a public health emergency. For this reason, we recommend that you plan to provide medications to your employees' families as well. Though this may not be a requirement to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site, it will greatly increase buy-in and support from your employees if they know that in an emergency their loved ones will be provided for, too, without having to visit an OPEN Dispensing Site.

The exact definition of a family member is, however, up to you to decide. 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 other individuals.

Regardless of the approach you adopt, your decision should be clearly communicated to employees and included in your organization's emergency plans. Procedures should be in place to obtain medical evaluation forms (as described above) for any individual who will be served by your CLOSED dispensing site.

## Educating people

It is important to provide accurate and complete information to your staff. Let your employees know why and how the site would be established, and how the medication dispensing process will work. This will provide your employees with confidence in the overall approach, and is an opportunity to present accurate and reassuring information before and during the emergency. The following topics should be addressed in the information/education process:

### Possible threatening agents

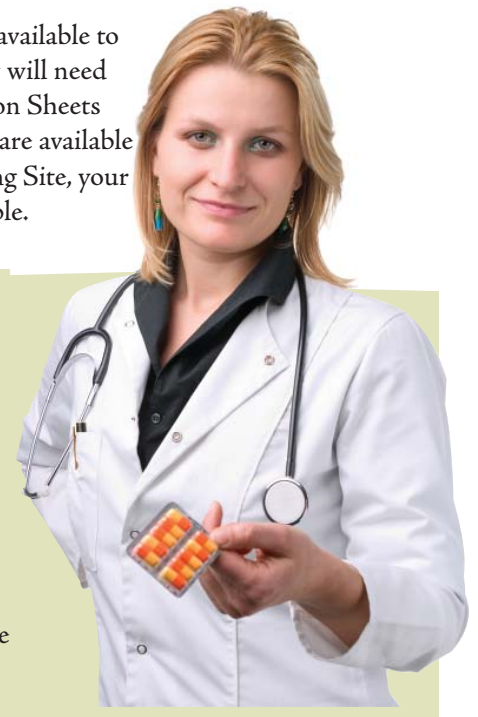
In a public health emergency it is very important that people are informed of the true nature of the threat. They need to know the answers to questions like:

- How do I know if I've been exposed?
- What are the symptoms?
- Is the disease contagious? If so, what do I need to do to protect myself and my family?
- What are the long-term implications?

Fact sheets about some possible threatening agents are available in the back of this workbook.

### Medications

Your employees will also need to know about the types of medication that may be available to protect against or treat certain biological agents. They need to know how long they will need to take the medication and other details related to the specific situation. Information Sheets regarding the medications from the SNS that might be dispensed at your location are available in the back of this workbook. If you decide to participate as a CLOSED Dispensing Site, your business will receive updated information from Public Health as it becomes available.



## Medical Personnel Required

To become a CLOSED Dispensing Site, you will need to have medical personnel available who can legally dispense medications. Regulations that identify who can legally dispense medications are determined by state law. In California, only licensed healthcare professionals can dispense medication. These regulations may change depending on the type of public health emergency declared. Your state licensing agency can provide more information about these regulations.

Your business may have medical personnel already on staff, or you may choose to arrange for outside medical personnel to come into your location. Such an arrangement will require a standing agreement between your business and the outside staff, including a clear understanding of how such an agreement will be activated at a time where their services will likely be in high demand.

# Preparing Your Business for Public Health Emergencies: How to Plan for and Set-up Your CLOSED Dispensing Site

## Develop or Expand Continuity Plans

Your business should develop a comprehensive Continuity of Operations Plan (also known as a COOP). Continuity planning helps businesses, corporations and government agencies ensure that essential functions will keep going during a wide range of emergencies and events. A COOP allows you to anticipate potential emergencies and develop procedures necessary to ensure employee safety, as well as continuity of business. Contact your local public health emergency planner or your city or county emergency manager to learn more about developing a COOP for your business.

If your business already has a COOP in place, update it to include a mass dispensing component and outline procedures for CLOSED Dispensing Site activation. Information in this workbook can serve as a guideline for developing that section.

## Protect Your Assets — Prepare Your Employees

As your business plans to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site, employees should be informed about the process and how it will affect them. Encouraging input and substantial feedback from employees will add value to the emergency preparedness measures of your business as a whole. Identify employees within your business who will assist with the planning and preparation process and involve them early.

### Appoint a committee

Appoint a committee or workgroup that can use this workbook to develop a comprehensive CLOSED Dispensing Site Plan. This committee should include human resource personnel, continuity managers, medical advisors, logistics specialists and security staff.

### Determine who your site will serve

Decide whether you will accommodate employees' families in your preparedness effort, and identify beforehand how you will define *household*, *dependents* or *family*. Then determine how many total employees and family members will be served so that you'll be able to estimate the amount of medication needed at the time of a public health emergency.

### Provide education/information

Provide people with as much information about dispensing site operations as possible. If you are not already doing so, consider having key employees trained in emergency preparedness, National Incident Management System (NIMS), and the Incident Command System (ICS).

Emergency preparedness training courses, listed in the box to the right, can be instructor-facilitated at your organization or taken online. These courses will help educate your employees about emergency preparedness procedures and protocols.

Free online training at  
[www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS](http://www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS)

IS-100: Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS)

IS-200: ICS for Single Resource and Initial Action Incidents

IS-700: National Incident Management System (NIMS), an Introduction



## Prepare Your Business

Preparing your business ahead of time for the possible activation of the Dispensing Site is essential.

### Identify a dispensing location on the premises

In order to dispense medications to a large number of people in a relatively short time, you will need to identify ahead of time a particular location on the premises that is capable of certain accommodations. This area should be fairly large and open, preferably a large meeting room or cafeteria. Use the sample Dispensing Site Flow Diagram (enclosed in workbook pocket) to help determine an appropriate location. Some key factors to consider include:

- 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



Practice your plan before an emergency occurs.

### Determine security needs and capabilities

Consider your current security resources and capabilities and determine if additional security will be needed in an emergency to protect your business and staff. Employees attending the CLOSED Dispensing Site will need to feel safe to do so. Furthermore, all medications will need to be secured at all times.

### Identify/purchase/store necessary supplies

- office supplies (pens, clipboards, etc.)
- tables and chairs
- bags or envelopes
- medical supplies (See Medical Supply Checklist included in the workbook pocket)



## Develop Your Procedures

The planning committee should take charge of developing procedures directly related to CLOSED Dispensing Site operations, in collaboration with Sonoma County Public Health.

Determine procedures specifically related to the activation, set-up, operation and deactivation of the Dispensing Site. Have procedures such as emergency call-down lists (also known as emergency calling trees) in place. The committee should lead the development of these procedures and work with Public Health Preparedness as needed so that all parties involved are aware of the plans and procedures.

### Determine how medications will be requested, delivered and/or returned

Your business will need to collaborate with Public Health to develop protocols for requesting a supply of medications from the national stockpile. You should have a count of the number of people you will supply with medications ready at the time of the emergency. This can be accomplished by maintaining accurate records and forms for employees and their household members, if applicable.



Once a request has been made, Public Health will contact your organization regarding the transfer of medications. A pre-determined delivery location should be identified in your planning efforts. You should identify individuals authorized to accept and sign for delivery and provide that information to Public Health. Your security personnel should be on-hand at all times when the medications are on the premises.

It is entirely possible that there will be some medications left over after all of your employees have attended the CLOSED Dispensing Site. These medications must be returned to Public Health so that they may be used for others.

### Firm up plans for handling medical emergencies, security concerns, etc.

Your plan should include procedures for handling small/typical emergencies that could potentially happen during the dispensing process. Consider and plan for:

- Minor medical emergencies – Call 9-1-1? Handle on-site?
- Security breach – Call police? Handle on-site?



## Exercise Your Plan

Make sure to practice the procedures you put into place. Exercising plans helps to identify any problems that can be rectified long before an emergency occurs. Consider conducting such exercises jointly with Public Health to further strengthen your collaboration.

## Practicing Your Plan

**S**onoma County Public Health conducts and participates in a variety of exercises and events that help us practice our plan. We encourage you to practice your plan as well.

The California statewide disaster drill takes place during the fall of each year. Many organizations with health-related components are invited to participate in this annual exercise. For more information, please contact Public Health Preparedness.



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## Is it possible that our business will need to operate a CLOSED Dispensing Site after-hours, during the weekend, or on a holiday?

Public health emergencies and/or bioterrorism attacks can strike at any time. It is essential that your business be prepared to operate a CLOSED Dispensing Site during non-working hours. Develop after-hours contact lists for key individuals and consider providing them to Sonoma County Public Health. Evaluate your organization and determine what and how long it would take to open and provide CLOSED Dispensing Site services. Develop communication/notification procedures to alert and inform your employees during non-working hours.

## What about employees who commute long distances to and from work?

As a CLOSED Dispensing Site, 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 Dispensing Site. It may be more convenient for these individuals to attend OPEN Dispensing Sites near their residences. In any case, you should plan for each and every employee.

## Could some parts of the region be affected more than others?

Public health emergencies can vary dramatically depending on factors such as weather, the disease, the mode of transmission, etc. It is entirely possible that some parts of a region may be required to provide emergency medications while others may not. Sonoma County Public Health will use epidemiology — the study and/or investigation of diseases and outbreaks in a defined area or population — to determine the full impact of the public health emergency. Please be aware that even though an emergency event might occur, the services of your CLOSED Dispensing Site may not be needed. Listen for information from Public Health throughout the event.

## What happens after dispensing operations are completed?

After your CLOSED Dispensing Site has completed its operations, you will need to provide the following to Public Health:

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



### Thank You

Sonoma County Public Health would like to thank you for taking the time to examine these materials and consider taking the first step toward becoming a CLOSED Dispensing Site.

By developing long-lasting relationships with the private sector, government agencies will be more adept and prepared to respond to a potential public health emergency. We appreciate your cooperation.



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**Missing any documents? Electronic versions of all of the forms referenced in this workbook are available online at the Sonoma County Public Health Preparedness website:**

**[www.sonoma-county.org/phpreparedness](http://www.sonoma-county.org/phpreparedness).**

**If you have questions about any of the documents or need more information or assistance, please contact Public Health Preparedness.**

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Cities Readiness Initiative

[www.marc.org/cri](http://www.marc.org/cri)

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**A Call to Action: The Choice is Yours**