



## Closed Points of Dispensing

During a bioterrorism attack or an infectious disease outbreak, it will probably be necessary to dispense medication rapidly to large numbers of people to prevent widespread illness and death. Closed Points of Dispensing (PODs) are one strategy for mass dispensing being actively considered by public health officials.



### What is a POD?

A point of dispensing (POD) is a place where a vaccine, antibiotic or other medication is quickly given to a large group of people. A public or community POD is a POD that is operated by the local health department and is open to the general public.

### What is a closed POD?

A closed POD is one that is restricted to a particular group or segment of the population<sup>1</sup>. It may be operated by a local health department or by another organization, such as a business, in collaboration with a local health department.

### Why run a closed POD?

A health department might run a closed POD to get prophylaxis or treatment to groups such as first responders or other critical staff (for example, the health department, regional water authority, etc.) so that they are able to continue working during the emergency. Closed PODs may also be used to target groups who cannot attend a public POD such as prisoners and nursing home residents. Closed PODs may also be run by organizations and agencies other than a health department, such as businesses<sup>1</sup>, health plans, assisted living communities or gated communities<sup>2</sup>.

### What are some advantages of closed PODs for health departments and the people they serve?

- The closed POD model has the potential to greatly alleviate the burden on public PODs, thus reducing the number of staff and volunteers needed to operate them. This will increase the likelihood that everyone in a community will receive prophylaxis in time to avoid serious illness.
- One of the benefits of a closed POD is that paperwork and medical screening can be done ahead of time for the people who will receive the emergency medications. Additionally, people prophylaxed at closed PODs may be able to serve as volunteers at public PODs, increasing the pool of healthy volunteers.
- Closed PODs can foster relationships between health departments and community groups, provided the planning for a closed POD is done in conjunction with a local health department, and supports the goals of both the health department and the community.

- Closed PODs that focus on groups that are more vulnerable during disasters (for example, people who would have difficulty getting to a public POD due to disability or living situation) have the potential to reduce morbidity and mortality among these groups.
- Businesses benefit by holding closed PODs. Doing so protects employees, aids in continuity of operations and provides community benefit by reducing the burden on public PODs. Some businesses plan to give back to the community by helping to staff public PODs after their workers have been prophylaxed <sup>1</sup>.

## What about liability for closed dispensers?

Due to the differences between state and local laws, there is currently no 'blanket' liability coverage for closed PODs that are not operated by health departments. However, some level of liability protection may be conferred by emergency orders during an event. Work with organizations in your community that are considering becoming closed dispensing sites to address their liability concerns.

## What questions might people attending closed PODs have?

CDC has identified concerns that people have about attending closed PODs<sup>3</sup>. Consider them when developing your communication messages:

- Do I have to go to the closed POD if I've registered there?
- Can my family go to the closed POD? What about my neighbor?
- Will I get the same medications as everyone else?

## Where can I learn more about closed points of dispensing?

- **Closed Dispensing Site Workbook:** The MidAmerican Regional Council has developed a workbook and other tools on closed dispensing for businesses; download them here: <http://www.marc.org/crif/>
- **Closed PODs: Partnering with Residential Boards and Gated Residential Communities**  
This article by the National Association of County & City Health Officials highlights a model practice involving dispensing in gated communities. Download it here: [http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/SNS/upload/POD-Article-3\\_gated-communities.pdf](http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/SNS/upload/POD-Article-3_gated-communities.pdf)

### Sources:

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