

TOPIC: GUIDANCE FOR CHAPTER DISASTER OPERATIONS DURING THE H1N1 (SWINE FLU) OUTBREAK

INTRODUCTION

Operations Updates will be issued periodically, and each Operations Update is effective immediately. If no end date is provided in the text of the document, the guidelines and procedures described in this document are not applicable after December 31, 2009. **Note: This document replaces the document entitled Operational Guidance that was posted to CrossNet on 4/27/09.**

AUDIENCE

This guidance is intended for Chapter Executives and Emergency Services Program Managers.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidance is to clarify Red Cross roles and responsibilities specific to the H1N1 (swine flu) public health emergency and to provide guidance to chapters in carrying out disaster response activities during this public health emergency.

KEY POINTS

1. During the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak, the Red Cross will continue to respond to disasters, will work to ensure a safe and adequate blood supply, will provide logistical support for distribution of vaccines, and will share informational materials.
2. During the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak, there are some roles that the Red Cross should not perform—including provision of medical care, providing vaccines, and patient tracking.

GUIDANCE

During the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak, there are service delivery roles that chapters are instructed to perform, and roles that should not be performed.

Section 1: Roles the Red Cross Will Perform

The Red Cross will –

- Continue to respond to disasters of all types and sizes during public health emergency conditions. When a disaster occurs that typically requires mass care sheltering, the Red Cross will apply the most appropriate local health precautions.
- Work to ensure a safe and adequate blood supply.

- Provide educational materials and logistical support for the provision of pharmaceuticals in the community (if requested). Assistance should be provided at distribution sites in a capacity that supports the comfort and/or safety of clients, assists in general logistics of food and site arrangements, and provides general support of the operation (including distributing educational materials). The Red Cross will not be directly involved in the distribution of individual medication doses.
- Educate the public and disseminate information from appropriate government sources about the nature and impact of the event, including preparedness measures, safety precautions, recommended actions, and sources of assistance.

In addition to these activities, should the H1N1 flu outbreak worsen, the Red Cross will support individuals isolated or quarantined in their homes with emergency food and supplies in accordance with local community plans.

Section 2: Roles the Red Cross Will Not Perform

The Red Cross will not -

- Establish shelters or other congregate care facilities when local authorities advise against it or where the operation of such facilities would enhance the likelihood of disease transmission. (Note: This could require chapters to provide hotel/motel accommodations for persons affected by disasters that occur during the H1N1 outbreak. If this occurs, the chapter must get approval from the Disaster Operations Center (DOC) before proceeding.)
- Assume responsibility for the provision of medical care in medical facilities, special needs shelters, temporary infirmaries, or overflow facilities for hospitals. However, should the H1N1 flu outbreak worsen, chapters may assist government or other qualified health providers in recruiting medically qualified volunteers to work under the direction and supervision of other agencies. Red Cross will provide referrals to these agencies and will not be responsible for verifying certifications and licensure. Further, these volunteers should work under the supervision and authority of the requesting agency and should not wear Red Cross identification.
- Purchase, store or distribute vaccines or medical supplies on behalf of public authorities.
- Violate worker safety guidelines published by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- Replace lost wages or assume responsibilities for needs arising from economic disruption for the public.
- Assume responsibility for patient tracking. Formal patient tracking is typically conducted by medical care providers.

- Conduct death notifications.
- Provide transportation to medical facilities unless not doing so would violate any requirements of the chapter's funding agreement or any pre-existing contract or agreement to provide transportation to medical facilities.

If your chapter receives a request to support these types of activities or other unusual requests, you must contact the Disaster Operations Center (DOC) prior to making an organizational commitment.

OBSOLETE DOCUMENTS

This Operations Update replaces the Operational Guidance that was posted to CrossNet on April 27, 2009. Key changes in this document include:

1. Under the section "The Red Cross Will--," the text "Support the local public health officials in their distribution of educational materials and pharmaceuticals" has been replaced with "Provide logistical support for provision of pharmaceuticals in the community (if requested)."
2. Under the section "The Red Cross Will Not-," the text "Purchase vaccines or medical supplies for use by public authorities" has been replaced with "Purchase, store or distribute vaccines or medical supplies on behalf of public authorities."
3. Throughout the document, three references to "flu pandemic" have been replaced with references to a "public health emergency."

With the release of this document, the April 27 Operational Guidance is now obsolete.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Operations Update #1](#) – Interim Guidance for Disaster Health and Disaster Mental Health Services in Shelters During H1N1(Swine Flu) Outbreak.

[Operations Update #2](#) – Staff Health Guidance for Disaster Operations During H1N1 (Swine Flu) Outbreak

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If there are questions about the information provided in this document, please contact the Disaster Operations Center at 202-303-5555 or via email at DOC@usa.redcross.org