

Point of Distribution (POD) Overview

What is a Point of Distribution?

A point of distribution, POD for short, is a location where medicines are dispensed to the public during a public health emergency.

Why are PODs Necessary?

Dispensing medicines is a vital aspect of the response measures taken during a public health emergency involving certain biological agents.

What is the difference between Closed and Open PODs?

Closed PODs

- NOT open to the public
- Locations that are run by a private organization with licensed staff to dispense medicines to employees and their families, and optionally their clients
- Allows businesses to keep operating with minor disruptions during an emergency
- Helps lower pressure on Open PODs

Open PODs

- Open to the public
- Locations run by trained Health Department staff
- Held at locations and can aid large amounts of people
- Planned for multiple locations strategically placed throughout the State

Becoming a Closed POD Partner

1. Communicate your interest by contacting your Office of Local Health to determine eligibility
2. Enroll in our Closed POD program by completing a Memorandum of Understanding
3. Complete a Closed POD Partner registration form

Criteria for becoming a Closed POD

-Your Organization meets one or more of the following-

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Works with vulnerable populations such as the elderly or physically disabled | <input type="checkbox"/> Manages first responders or critical infrastructure |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> A private business |

-AND-

Your organization has on staff, or has access to, a licensed medical professional during a public health emergency to oversee dispensing operation.

What are the responsibilities of a Closed POD?

For a Closed POD to receive and dispense medicines they must follow Health Department instructions and make sure the following criteria are met:

- Medicine is dispensed per the Health Department Medical Orders and algorithms
- Recipients are given with a notice of Privacy Practices
- Dispensers follow the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Closed PODs keep all dispensing documentation

Benefits of becoming a Closed POD

- Makes sure hard-to-reach or vulnerable populations receive medicine in a timely manner
- Adds to the organization's Continuity of Operations Plans making it better able to whether an emergency
- Is beneficial to employee health and safety
- Aids in becoming more resilient during and after an emergency
- Shows your commitment to the community
- Offers a valuable service to employees and others
- Creates partnerships with local and federal agencies
- Large groups of people can be reached faster, protecting those who may have been exposed

What is my liability when becoming a Closed POD Partner?

Liability issues are a common concern that employers have expressed when asked to distribute or dispense medical countermeasures on behalf of public health. Liability protection is provided to organizations at the federal level when a Public Readiness Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act declaration is issued.

The PREP Act authorizes the Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services to issue a PREP Act declaration in response to a public health emergency. A PREP Act declaration provides immunity from tort liability claims (except willful misconduct) to individuals or organizations involved in the manufacture, distribution, or dispensing of medical countermeasures. PREP Act declarations have been issued many times in the past. The most recent example was H1N1 in 2009.

On the state level Vermont provides the same liability protections and workers' compensation coverage to volunteers as it would for state employees when training for or responding to a public health event or emergency. To be qualified for such protection volunteers must serve at the request of, and under the direction and control of, a state agency such as the health department, and receive no compensation. Partnerships, associations, or corporations involved in emergency management activities are immune from civil liability for any act performed within the scope of their agreement with the state agency.

How much will becoming a Closed POD Partner cost me?

Medicines given to Closed PODs come at no charge.

What happens if I am unable to open my POD during a public health emergency?

We understand that circumstances may not all you to activate your POD during a public health emergency. This can be thing like your dispensing area or medical practitioner being unavailable. There is no legal requirement for you to activate your POD, but your employees and those you may service will then need to travel to an Open POD to get medicines.