**Pandemic Preparedness for Faith-based Organizations**

**Instructor Guide: Section 2: Building Hope: Understanding the Potential Impact of a Pandemic and Creating a Plan**

**Goals**
This section enables congregations, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship to fulfill their mission during a pandemic by:

- Listing potential pandemic impacts on a faith-based organization and the communities it serves.
- Developing a basic pandemic preparedness and response plan to address those potential impacts.

**Objectives**
By the end of this section, religious leaders or individuals given the task of disaster planning within an FBO will be able to:

- Go back to their organization and confidently describe the potential impacts of a pandemic in their community and how those impacts could affect their place of worship and the people served.
- Identify the most appropriate people within their organization who could make up a solid planning team.
- Write critical action steps that are specific to their organization for pandemic planning. They also will be able to develop priority tasks and functions, keeping in mind the resources (especially staff and volunteers) that could be decreased due to sickness and fear of the sickness.

**Section Duration**
This section is 2–3 hours in length, depending on the depth and breadth of the class discussions.

**Additional Preparation**
This section encourages student interaction, so be prepared to lead discussions, facilitate activities, answer questions and interact effectively with the class.

**Additional materials and equipment include:**

- Printed handouts for each participant
  - Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template
  - Handout 2.1 – Considering the Impact: Brainstorm
  - Handout 2.2 – Potential Impacts
- Chart paper, easel and markers
Welcome to the second section of Pandemic Preparedness for Faith-based Organizations. In the first section, you learned skills to help reduce pandemic-related illness and death in your FBO. In this section, you will develop a preparedness plan based on the potential impacts of a pandemic on your FBO. The third section will help your FBO develop a strategy for assisting the community during and after a pandemic.

After this session, you will be able to:
- List potential pandemic influenza impacts on your FBO and in communities that you serve
- Develop a basic pandemic preparedness and response plan to address those potential impacts

With high levels of illness and death, a pandemic could bring unprecedented social disruption and economic loss. For instance, delivery of materials and resources normally sent to your community could be halted due to a lack of labor in the transportation industry. Everyday life could be disrupted because so many people in so many places could become seriously ill at the same time.

Every community will have challenges and struggles as they face the pandemic among the families that live and work there. If pandemic influenza swept across the United States, every state and community would deal with certain issues and challenges that would be the same or similar, no matter the location. Let’s take a look at some.
Impacts resulting from social disruption and loss can range from public gatherings being halted, such as closing places of worship, schools and businesses, to the interruptions of basic services, such as public transportation and food delivery, due to workforce reduction from sickness. All segments of local community life would be impacted, including your faith-based organization.

Susceptibility to the pandemic influenza virus will be universal. No one will be exempt.

During a pandemic, 30% or even more of the overall population could become sick. Among working adults, an average of 20% could become ill during a community outbreak. Infection rates could be highest among school-aged children (about 40%) and decline with age.


Note to Instructor: Hand out and refer participants to Handout 2.1. Give them time to brainstorm some answers specific to their organization. Inform them that their answers to these questions will give them a starting point later when developing their specific plan. Discuss answers as a class.

Note to Instructor: Pass out Handout 2.2. Look at Handout 2.2 Potential Impacts. In the left column, you’ll see a list of potential impacts designated as “General.” Potential general impacts can include:

- Public gatherings halted
- Lost public transportation
- No food delivery
- 30% or more could become sick

Think of others that could be included on this list. Write them in the spaces in the left column.
As you begin the planning process, acknowledge not only the general potential impacts we just discussed, but also some potential impacts that are unique to your community and organization. These will play a large role in how you develop your plan.

Also, identifying the community and organizational impacts will help you to get a better sense of your true areas of vulnerability.

The number of hospitalizations and deaths will depend on the virulence of the pandemic. If infection rate is high, hospitals could be pushed to maximum capacity. High-risk groups will be largely impacted. If your FBO normally provides varying levels of service to these groups, keep in mind that families with infants, the elderly, pregnant women, the homeless, low-income populations and people with chronic medical conditions likely will require increased assistance.

There are exceptions to the rule, though. As stated in Section 1, a high-risk group during the 1918 flu was adults age 20-50.

Under General Impacts, we discussed that there is the potential for 30% of the population to get sick during a pandemic (or potentially 20% of adults and 40% of children). Nationally, that is a lot of people. Out of a U.S. population of 314 million, 94 million people could get sick.

Let’s talk about that at a community level. If you have a total population of 45,000, take 45,000 x 0.30. That equals 13,500 people getting sick.

In your own organization:
What if you serve 250 adults? That would be 250 x 0.20, which equals 50 adults sick. Those 250 adults have 200 associated children. That would be 200 x 0.40, which equals 80 children sick.

If a community were to experience a pandemic influenza event, it wouldn’t be just a one-time occurrence. A community probably will experience waves of the illness over the course of a year or more with each wave lasting six to eight weeks. Like any other place of business or service, your FBO could potentially experience weeks of severe employee and volunteer shortages or even a public health mandate to close your doors to public gatherings for a time.
In a pandemic, absenteeism will be caused by illness, the need to care for ill family members or fear of infection, all of which may reach 40% during the peak weeks of a community outbreak. Lower rates of absenteeism will happen during the weeks before and after the peak.

How many people do you have on staff? Number of employees x 40% = number absent (for example, 20 staff members would be reduced to 12)

In addition, certain public health measures (such as closing schools, quarantining household contacts of infected individuals and other social distancing measures) are likely to increase rates of absenteeism.

In the event of a pandemic, many members of your faith-based community will become sick, and some will die. The demand for counseling and support is likely to increase significantly at a time when the capacity of the organization to provide such support is compromised due to a high absentee rate among pandemic-impacted staff and volunteers, plus social distancing practices to minimize spreading the disease. In addition, standard services, such as praise and worship, funerals and weddings, may be halted to minimize spread.

Questions your FBO should consider:

- How do you provide funeral services for multiple families at a time? Or what will be your policy for handling multiple funerals that may have to be postponed due to staff illness, family illness or the demands exceeding funeral homes’ or your capabilities to work with families?
- Belief systems will be tested at this time. How do you intend to address this issue during a time when people feel hopeless or frustrated, and are mourning the loss of loved ones?
- Do you feel it is important to address beliefs and values before such a potential event becomes catastrophic?
Normal functions and activities will be disrupted to minimize spreading the disease. The impact could be significant if social distancing policies are enacted within the community. Worship services, classes and other activities may need to be transformed or even curtailed for an extended time.

More questions you should consider:
• How do you plan to continue delivering your messages each week?
• What are you capable of providing to those who are homebound?
• How can you maintain the support structure of your FBO and people you serve if individuals cannot physically come together?

Faith-based organizations are likely to encounter economic consequences during a pandemic influenza outbreak including:
• Potential budget reductions due to reduced capacity of pandemic-impacted members to honor pledges and other giving.
• Potential loss of productivity from pandemic-impacted staff members and volunteers.
• Potential increased costs to maintain critical functions during a pandemic, including printing and mailing for enhanced communications with members and expenses for alternative worship delivery systems, such as radio or TV ministry.

Look again at Handout 2.2. In the right column, you’ll see a list of potential impacts designated as Community/Organization. Potential community/organizational impacts can include:
• Increased hospitalizations – Depending on the rate of infections, hospitals could be pushed to maximum capacity, and death rates could rise.
• Impact on high-risk groups – which could require more assistance from your organization if you’re capable of doing so
• The 30-20-40 Rule
• 6- to 8-week pandemic waves – which could come at multiple times throughout a year or more
• 40% absenteeism – not only from those who are sick, but also those taking care of sick family members and those fearful of the illness
• Many members of your organization could be affected.
• Counseling/support services needed – also potentially reaching or pushing beyond your maximum capacity to serve
Disruption of normal activities simply from the attempt to minimize the spread of the disease
- Budget restrictions due to reduced capacity of flu-impacted members to honor pledges
- Loss of productivity
- Increased costs due to need for enhanced communications

Can you think of any others that could be included on this list? If so, write them down in the available spaces in the right column.

**Note to Instructor:** Take a few minutes to review and discuss the additional items participants added to their lists.

---

As you begin developing your plan, think about specific demands on your organization before or during a pandemic. These include but are not limited to:
- Expanded electronic and other communications capabilities to transform worship and teaching services and maintain contact with members during a pandemic influenza outbreak. This might include websites, blogs, podcasts, local newspaper announcements and pre-recorded widely distributed phone messages.
- Expanded health activities to extend timely and factual information on pandemic influenza to staff, members and people in the communities. This includes plans to distribute materials with basic information about the pandemic, such as signs and symptoms, how it is spread, ways to protect yourself and your family, family preparedness plans and how to care for ill people at home.
- Expanded community-outreach efforts to minister to people with special needs, such as elderly, disabled and limited English speakers.
We’ve discussed the possible impacts a pandemic might have on your FBO. We now will walk through the parts of a plan and give you a chance to write various parts that will provide solid groundwork and direction for your planning team.

Our discussion will refer to the pandemic template and should be used however best suits your organization. The purpose of this template is to organize a series of actions that your FBO should take to prepare for a potential pandemic in your community.

**Note to Instructor:** Refer each participant to their copy of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template on paper or on a computer, and ask that they follow along in the discussion and begin completing various sections.

The first step in pandemic preparedness and response planning is the development of a Pandemic Planning Committee. Depending on the size of your organization, these individuals could be religious leaders or other administrative personnel. However, the committee also could include members who have stepped forward with an interest or a capability in disaster planning.

If you are a fairly small organization, consider adding to your committee an individual or individuals from other FBOs in your community with similar characteristics. This would provide you more insight and expand your available resources and capabilities.

The task of this planning committee is to develop, maintain and implement the pandemic preparedness and response plan for your FBO.
Your organization’s committee should be made up of:

- A lead manager – who is delegated to lead the planning committee and who will serve as the organization’s spokesperson in case of a pandemic outbreak. A separate spokesperson also could be assigned. This individual could be a religious leader, staff member or other designated individual who has an interest or expertise in this area.
- An alternate manager – who should be designated in the chance that the primary person is unable to serve in a pandemic event.
- Other planning committee members – who could be various administrative leaders from your organization or members/volunteers with an interest or expertise in this area. The number of other committee members will depend on your organization size and demands.

To create the planning committee, develop a team based on individuals’ knowledge and competency in:

- The organization’s finances and how an appropriate response could be developed for funding demands while potentially collecting fewer funds.
- The organization’s volunteer base and its potential capabilities. Volunteers may be needed to complete tasks if there is absenteeism among the staff.
- The organization’s variety of available services and how certain services (such as worship/praise, counseling or teaching) could be altered to fall in line with criteria laid out in the contingency plans.
- Local resources (such as emergency management, Red Cross, public health, and other state and county organizations) that could be relied upon, partnered with or helped during a pandemic.

To build the planning committee:

- Record basic contact information for your organization and for all committee members. Record all types of contact information. During a pandemic, some forms of communication may be delayed. People may need to work from an off-site location.
- Develop contact information for key external contacts (including public health officials, emergency management agencies, Extension Service, key government agencies and others) who may be helpful in providing educational materials and emergency planning advice, or sharing tasks and duties when it comes to serving community members before, during or after a pandemic event.
**Note to Instructor:** Refer students to Step 2 of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

Based on what we discussed in the first half of this section, your goal is to consider the potential impact of a pandemic outbreak on your organization’s primary and critical activities and services.

First, list the primary functions performed by your organization that would be impacted if a pandemic occurred in your community. These functions might include worship services, youth education, funerals and weddings.

Once the primary functions have been listed, identify which ones are considered critical functions. Critical functions are those that must continue to be carried out, even in a pandemic. For your FBO, these may include, for example, only worship services and counseling services.

It may even be helpful to start out with a list of all functions your organization administers on a daily or weekly basis. From that general list, begin to weed it down into the primary functions, and then down into the critical functions.

**Note to Instructor:** Brainstorm primary functions as a group, then give participants time to fill in the template with functions specific to their FBO. Instruct them to star the functions that are critical. Together discuss the critical functions of the different groups. The discussion will help groups think of functions that are either primary or critical to their own FBO.

**Note to Instructor:** Refer participants to Step 3 of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

The third step of your plan is to develop contingency plans for the performance of all critical functions you’ve identified for your faith-based organization during a pandemic. Depending on the number of critical functions for your FBO, this could be a lengthy process. Approach the task systematically—one function at a time.
Contingency Plans Include:
- Name and description
- List of personnel
- Impact of social distancing
- Needs and opportunities to cross-train
- Alternative approaches

Using the template, include the following information for each critical function:
- Name and description of critical function
- List of personnel and back-up personnel for the performance of this function. List contact information for each of these people.
- Summarize the likely impact if this function was disrupted by recommended social distancing practices over an extended time.
- Identify needs and opportunities to cross-train staff and volunteers to perform this critical function if the primary and/or secondary provider of this function is unable to serve.
- Follow up with an analysis of alternative approaches, if any, to maintain the performance of this function during the pandemic. If necessary, identify needs and opportunities to alter normal practices of this critical function that would help to reduce transmission of the flu.

Duplicate the blank form of this page for each critical function you list.

Note to Instructor: Have each group choose one critical function (perhaps a small, uncomplicated one) and give them time to fill out the blank form for that function. Answer questions as they encounter problems. When the whole group gets back together, ask for comments and questions. What did they find easy to complete in this process and what did they find difficult? What hurdles do they see in completing this process for all the critical functions of their FBO?

To review, these first three steps in the planning process are the most important but are not the only steps for developing a comprehensive pandemic preparedness and response plan for your FBO.
The last five steps in developing your Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan involve communication in some way. A plan is not effective if no one knows about it or no one knows how to implement the plan in an emergency situation.

In this last segment, we will discuss:

- Disseminating information to those who need to know how your FBO will respond to a pandemic
- Developing a communication plan to disseminate that information
- Identifying those in your FBO with special needs who may need additional help or a different means of communication
- Coordinating with other FBOs or other agencies during a pandemic
- Sharing your plan with members of your FBO

**Note to Instructor:** Refer students to page 9 of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

Delegate the responsibility to develop a public information and dissemination plan to an appropriate person or people. This person or people would provide timely and factual information on the pandemic to your staff, organizational members and people in the communities.

This includes information from state and local health departments about signs and symptoms, how it is spread, how to protect yourself and more. Be sure to determine how the information will be delivered, such as through sermons, classes or announcements.

Keep in mind that a plan to disseminate information should not necessarily be enacted at the time of a pandemic. Instead, begin sharing the message before an event ever takes place. For instance, begin placing hand washing posters in your bathrooms and messages in the church bulletin even before a normal flu season.

Determine how your organization handles rumors, misinformation, fear and anxiety, and consider the various cultures that may exist within your organization and community. This, of course, can take place before or during a pandemic.

**Class Discussion:** More than likely, you have had to deal with rumors or misinformation in the past. Can you share what you found worked or what didn’t work in dealing with these miscommunications?
Step 5: Develop Communication Plan

- Identification of key contacts
- Chain of communications
- Track and communicate organization and employee status

**Note to Instructor:** Refer students to Step 5 of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

Establish a crisis communications plan and revise it periodically. This plan includes identification of key contacts (with back-ups) who are inside, and possibly outside, your organization; a chain of communications (including commonly used suppliers and customers who provide or use essential resources; and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.

Depending on your organization, Step 5 could become quite detailed – almost becoming a plan within a plan. The level of detail will be determined by your needs and priorities, the size of your organization and your role in the community.

A crisis communications plan will provide the capability to maintain continuous communication during a pandemic with:

**Employees and Volunteers:** Be prepared to provide them with information on if, when and how to report during a pandemic. Set up a telephone call or texting tree, password-protected page on the organization website, an email alert or a call-in voice recording to communicate. Be clear on how their jobs or tasks may be affected.

**Organization Leaders:** Equip organization leaders with all relevant information needed for the protection of employees, members, volunteers and vendors. This might include the location of temporary services, alternative contact information for staff or alternate ways of conducting business, such as a payroll or bookkeeping service.

**Organization Members:** Update your members on how regular services have been changed to accommodate the situation. Set up a list of local media contacts that could help you facilitate the delivery of important messages. If possible, set up a designated Web page that would announce available or changed services and list ways in which members can help.
Public: It may be important to update the general public, with calm assurance, that all resources are being used to protect staff, organizational members and the community. If applicable to your organization, clearly communicate the plans that are in place for assistance during a pandemic.

Government: Tell local officials what your organization is prepared to do to help in responding to a pandemic. Also, communicate with local, state and federal authorities about what emergency assistance is needed for you to continue essential daily activities and services.

Vendors: Contact any company with which you conduct regular business on how common activities may have to be changed. Maintain an up-to-date contact list for all vendors.

Note to Instructor: Refer participants to Step 6 of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

Identify people with special needs, such as elderly, disabled, homeless, low-income populations, limited English speakers or reading/learning impaired, and include their needs in your response and preparedness plans.

Using the template to collect individuals’ information, it may be possible to develop a community outreach ministry program that includes:
- A list of people with special needs that your organization is prepared to assist during a pandemic.
- A list of volunteers who are willing to participate in this outreach ministry initiative.
- Procedures and a protocol for volunteers to maintain contact with the special needs population during the outbreak, making sure that these people receive the information and assistance they need.
Step 7: Coordinate with Others
- Existing plans
- Use of your facilities
- Your potential involvement

**Note to Instructor:** Refer students to Step 7 of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

Delegate to an appropriate person(s) the responsibility to contact other local government and/or service organizations to determine what plans they already have in place. This will help to understand others’ capabilities and coordinate your pandemic preparedness and response plans during planning.

For example, your facilities may be needed as a vaccination clinic, a food pantry or perhaps even an overflow health care or hospital facility. Additionally, there may be needs and opportunities for expanded community outreach involvement using volunteers to serve the communities in a variety of different roles, such as the delivery of food and other essential supplies to flu-quarantined families.

But before exploring such needs and opportunities with external organizations and agencies, assess and define the scope and nature of your organization’s potential involvement in community outreach activities.

Step 8: Share Your Plan
- Staff / members
- Volunteers
- Agencies / organizations
- Other FBOs

**Note to Instructor:** Refer students to Step 8 of the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

Share information about your pandemic preparedness and response plan with staff, organizational members, organizational volunteers and external agencies/organizations in the communities that you serve.

Some of you may have an established network among FBOs in your community. If not, pandemic preparedness planning is an excellent activity to create this network. Though many emergency response capabilities may be similar among FBOs, many are unique. Such unique capabilities can include a TV-ministry capacity, shelter facilities and community food bank. By sharing your plan with other FBOs, you will only strengthen your response and aid to your community.

You may want to make copies of your plan to give to intended recipients or post it on your website and refer specified individuals to it.

Review Your Plan
- Review semi-annually
- Practice
- Date of change
- Who made the change

**Note to Instructor:** Refer students to Record of Changes in the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan template.

Your completed plan is not a stagnant document. It should be reviewed at least semi-annually and updated with new information as it becomes available. Set aside time to practice your plan. Making this effort will help identify where some weaknesses or flaws exist before a pandemic hits and efforts become critical. When changes are made, be sure to note the date of change and who made the change.
At this point, developing a pandemic preparedness plan may seem like a daunting and impossible task. It is neither. Approach the process systematically and in small chunks. The hope is that you never have to use the plan, but the work you put forth now will be invaluable in the event of a widespread pandemic.