

Template for infectious disease COOP supplement

How to use this template

Background

This document provides a concise outline that agencies may use to supplement all-hazards continuity of operations planning. This document is not meant to stand alone. Rather, effective pandemic planning includes continuity, emergency management, HR, communications, safety, security, and related agency functions.

Why this is important

Safety first! Protecting the health and safety of the state workforce, partners, and visitors to state facilities is a top priority. In addition, agencies need to maximize the workforce available to maintain government services while doing our part to contain the outbreak and reduce its impact on public health.

An infectious disease outbreak can pose unique operational challenges due to its widespread geographic reach, cross-functional consequences for agency programs, and impacts on the general public. This makes it valuable for readiness and preparedness efforts to consider specific continuity strategies for managing this hazard.

Questions to help with plan design and organization

- Who is included in the creation of the agency's original pandemic plan?
- How is the plan revised over time?
- How is the plan incorporated into larger agency documents (such as the COOP plan)? It is suggested that the infectious disease document is an annex to the agency's continuity of operations plan.
- Background topics such as data practices, statutory references, purpose or mission statements, planning assumptions, concepts of operations, and related items should be included in the base plan.
- Does the agency have specific MEOP or other responsibilities during a pandemic response that may be different than when operations are disrupted by other hazards?
- Does the trigger process of continuity plan activation for an infectious disease outbreak and/or pandemic differ from other hazards?
- How may priority service needs change during the disruption for a disease outbreak that unfolds in waves over an extended period of time?

Suggested topics for infectious disease supplement to agency COOP plan

Connection to agency COOP plan

How does the infectious disease supplement relate to all-hazards planning? For example:

The base COOP plan identifies four broad risks to agency operations (loss of building, loss of IT/data, loss of personnel, and loss of critical 3rd party vendors). This annex addresses the specific hazards of a pandemic or other infectious disease and outlines processes to mitigate this hazard. The general elements of continuity planning, such as orders of succession and essential records, remain important for a specific pandemic scenario.

Priority services

- Vet with leadership the priority services found in [*for example*: Appendix P, Annex I, Chart 2, etc.]
- Provide updates to priority services to MMB Enterprise Steering Team at coop.mmb@state.mn.us
- Assess the minimum number of people needed for each priority service, focusing on priority 1 and 2 services
- Identify telework strategies
- Assess need to suspend lower priority services and/or reassign employees
- Monitor programs over time as a pandemic may come in waves and last for a considerable duration
- Develop a strategy for any MMB required absentee reporting needs

Protect the office space and public areas

- Use MMB's pre-scripted messaging to remind employees about basic hygiene, etiquette, and paid leave options, as needed. MMB will provide guidance as to when to implement paid leave options.
- Identify the process and persons responsible to set up and resupply hand sanitizer stations and boxes of facial tissues
- Identify programs that have heavy travel and monitor barriers to travel [*for example*: quarantines, border closures, etc.]
- Use MMB and MDH's guidance on implementing social distancing strategies in the workplace [*for example*: reducing in-person meetings, discouraging physical contact such as handshakes and hugs, delaying retirement parties, encouraging Skype use, adjusting work schedules, staggering breaks, redeploying employees, closing spaces to non-employees, etc.]
- Develop a schedule in coordination with appropriate partners for additional cleaning in work areas, bathrooms, and break areas [*for example*: agency safety committee, agency HR office, Admin facilities management division, Admin RECS, building owner, state agency partners, etc.] Note: Department of Administration will provide guidance for additional work area cleaning, if appropriate

Communication strategies

All agencies must strive to provide factual and timely information that educates without causing confusion, anxiety, or panic in the midst of a novel infectious disease outbreak or pandemic. Agencies must vet all messaging with MMB prior to sending out to ensure consistent communications across the State of Minnesota.

Consider the following when developing communication strategies:

- Internal agency communications – leadership, supervisors, employees, etc.
- Process for keeping MMB and the Governor’s office informed
- Requirements (*if any*) to communicate with federal or local government partners
- Vendors, suppliers, contractors, and related business partners
- Visitors, guests, clients, students, patients, residents, and related customers
- Media relations and the general public
- Use MMB’s template messaging for voice mail and website messages

Other considerations

- Agencies may be asked for employee status reports (absentee reports) should a novel infectious disease become more virulent or cause noticeable illness in the state and/or the state’s workforce. MMB will provide guidance on capturing this information, if needed.
- During a significant infectious disease outbreak or pandemic, employees may become anxious or concerned. Agencies should use MMB’s Organizational Health’s templates for messaging to employees.