

Governor's Task Force for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness

Overview of Key Policy Issues to be discussed by Task Force

Overview of Topics:

1) Credible and effective decision-making during a pandemic

Background: A pandemic would severely stress society. Response will require difficult decisions that seriously affect people's lives (e.g., allocation of scarce medical care). Community resilience and the extent to which people cooperate with leadership will be important in minimizing adverse outcomes and will be affected by the extent to which people believe in the process and in those who make those decisions.

Objective:

- A) To establish credible decision-making mechanisms that are transparent, help to assure that important decisions are equitable and reflect community values, and operate efficiently enough to aid rather than impair response.
- B) If a new decision-making process is established for certain issues related to a pandemic, provide guidance as to which issues should be referred to that process.
- C) Recommend legislative action as needed to assure clear legal authority to make effective decisions during a pandemic.

2) Adequacy of health care surge capacity

Background: A pandemic could severely stress and overwhelm the capacity of our current health care system. It will impede our ability to provide and sustain care to those who need it.

Objectives:

- A) Develop a realistic understanding of the capacity of the health care system to respond to a pandemic. Outline measures and options that can be taken to improve capacity and the associated challenges.
- B) Identify measures that can be taken to improve public awareness and adherence to health messages in order to use the health care system optimally.
- C) Identify measures that can be taken to protect health care workers and to preserve the ability of the health care system to function during (and after) a pandemic.
- D) Develop a realistic approach to identifying critical issues of hospitals and health clinics, developing resolutions to said issues and preserving the ability of the health care system to function during (and after) a pandemic. Critical issues may include:

- a. Funding
- b. Staffing
- c. Medical equipment and supplies
- d. Family care centers

- E) Identify measures to protect hospitals and health care providers from the consequences of a pandemic, including liability for providing care when it is not possible to meet usual standards of care.
- F) If recommendations for Issue 1 create a decision making process separate from usual, public health operational decision making processes, are there decisions related to this issue that should be referred to that process.

3) Maintaining essential business and community services during a pandemic.

Background: A pandemic can severely disrupt business operations and provision of essential community services in several ways.

- A) Absenteeism rates may be 20-40% (due to illness, care for others, to confine spread, school closures, etc.)
- B) Travel and gathering restrictions may be in place.
- C) The widespread effect will limit ability to request assistance from others and will mean that suppliers and customers will also be affected.
- D) A pandemic can last for 6-8 weeks in a given community and have multiple waves leading to a prolonged impact.
- E) In an interconnected (by supply lines, financing, etc.) community and world, failure of a business or service will affect others and become a community issue.

Objectives:

- A) Identify measures that can be taken to identify essential services (public and private) and encourage/support those responsible in planning to minimize the potential for disruption.
- B) Identify measures that can be taken to encourage/support planning by businesses to minimize the potential for disruption.
- C) How do we assure that decisions about containment measures consider the implications for essential services and business continuity?
- D) Identify the responsibility of society and government to protect individuals asked to provide essential services during a pandemic and steps that can be taken to provide that protection.
- E) If recommendations for Issue 1 create a decision making process separate from usual, public health operational decision making processes, are there decisions related to this issue that should be referred to that process.

4) Support for those confined by illness or to limit spread of disease.

Background: A pandemic may lead to individuals being confined to home or an alternate facility by illness who would ordinarily obtain care elsewhere. Individuals may also be confined to home to limit spread, or may be removed from school due to closure. Caregivers and responders may also need support to maintain a high level of functioning during this time. In any of these cases, support may be needed to improve outcomes. Support may include information, basic needs (e.g., food, childcare), financial assistance, mental health care, or medical care. The impact and need for support would be greatest for members of the community who are more vulnerable due to preexisting illness, poverty, social or physical isolation, or lack of other means of support.

Objective:

- A) What is the responsibility of society and of government to provide support to those confined by illness or to contain spread during a pandemic.
- B) How can we assure that decisions about confinement, or that otherwise impose a burden on individuals, are made based on science and considering ethical principles, including proportionality and justice.
- C) Identify measures that can be taken to improve capability to provide such support.
- D) If recommendations for Issue 1 create a decision making process separate from usual, public health operational decision making processes, are there decisions related to this issue that should be referred to that process.

5) Purchase, management, and use of an antiviral stockpile.

Background: Medications exist that can prevent (prophylaxis) or treat influenza. Questions remain about how effective they would be against a pandemic strain, whether resistance would develop, and how to optimally use them during a pandemic. However, these medications have the potential to limit spread and to reduce the severity of illness. Use of these medications could both directly limit morbidity and mortality and also reduce the burden on hospitals. However, current supplies and production are substantially inadequate to meet the projected needs during a pandemic. The National Vaccine Advisory Committee recommended and DHHS is currently planning to procure a stockpile, which would allow treatment of 25% of the U.S. population. Full purchase of that stockpile will require state funding (~\$3.6 million). Antivirals have a limited shelf life and in the absence of a pandemic the stockpile is likely to go unused. In addition to a decision to purchase, priorities for use and a mechanism to adjust those priorities need to be developed.

Objective:

- A) Determine whether to recommend purchase by the State of Utah of an antiviral stockpile.

- B) Determine any conditions that should govern additional purchases (beyond those purchased by State of Utah) of antiviral medications under the federal contract by private or local entities.
- C) Review and approve an interim plan for use of an antiviral stockpile, including the approach to use (treatment vs. prophylaxis), priorities for use, and the approach to allocation among jurisdictions and priority groups.
- D) If recommendations for Issue 1 create a decision making process separate from usual, public health operational decision making processes, should decisions about altering recommendations based on circumstances or other decisions related to this issue be referred to that process.

6) Management and use of vaccine during a pandemic.

Background: An effective vaccine against a pandemic influenza virus could be lifesaving. Under most scenarios, vaccine will not be available during the early part of a pandemic and will be in limited supply thereafter. The current vaccine distribution system in Utah is complex, including public and private providers, and various funding mechanisms. When vaccine becomes available, there is likely to be substantial demand, a need to prioritize its use, and a need to closely monitor and control who receives it. There may also be a need to closely monitor adverse reactions and/or efficacy. Given those issues, consideration is needed as to how to manage, distribute, and administer vaccine and how to determine priorities for its use.

Objectives:

- A) Approve interim recommendations for priority groups to receive vaccine.
- B) If recommendations for Issue 1 create a decision making process separate from usual, public health operational decision making processes, should decisions about altering recommendations based on circumstances or other decisions related to this issue be referred to that process.