

Mass Fatality Planning

Assumptions

- Approximately 75,000 deaths occurred in North Carolina in 2004.
- During a six to eight week wave of a moderate influenza pandemic, North Carolina could experience approximately 6,700 deaths due to influenza. A severe pandemic could result in almost 70,000 deaths over the same time period.
- There are approximately 732 funeral service firms and 72 crematories in North Carolina.
- An autopsy is not required to confirm influenza as the cause of death; however, autopsies may be performed early in the pandemic to confirm the presence of pandemic influenza in North Carolina.

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders

NC Division of Public Health (NC DPH)

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)

- In collaboration with the General Communicable Disease Control branch, determine which, if any, cases will be considered medical examiner cases
 - Early in the pandemic when establishing the presence of pandemic influenza in North Carolina
- Provide subject matter expertise on planning for and handling a mass fatality situation to key partners
 - OCME has a Mass Fatality Incident Plan in place which could be used to guide healthcare facilities in their planning and response

General Communicable Disease Control branch (GCDC)

- Provide information to key organizations regarding pandemic influenza
 - Provide updated information to the members of the NCBFS, NCFDA, FDMANC, etc. via newsletters, websites, etc.
- Coordinate needs assessment of current morgue capacity across North Carolina
 - Morgue capacity at healthcare facilities
 - Ask North Carolina Hospital Association to conduct survey of morgue capacity at hospitals
 - Ask Office of Emergency Medical Services, Division of Facility Services to conduct a survey of other healthcare facilities
 - Assessing morgue capacity in non-healthcare facilities to be performed by OCME and NCBFS
 - Current capacity in county morgues
 - Surge capacity using refrigerated trucks
 - Alternate locations such as skating rinks

Vital Records

- Establish a voluntary “acute death reporting system” with sentinel county registrars
 - Report number of influenza and pneumonia deaths as a proportion of the total number of deaths by week

- This system would be activated during Pandemic Phase 6 with cases with cases within the United States
- Mandatory pediatric influenza death reporting

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service (NCBFS)

- Review licensure process with NCBFS' legal counsel to facilitate rapid licensure for surge capacity in a pandemic
 - Re-activation of inactive licensees
 - Temporary licensing of trainees / students to assist with mortuary services during a pandemic
- Identify essential personnel involved in mortuary service (Vaccine Priority Group Tier 3*) who would receive pandemic influenza vaccine once it became available
 - 2500 NCBFS licensees (active and inactive)
 - 100 trainees
 - 150 crematory personnel (72 crematoriums; approximately 2 personnel per crematory)
 - Additional staff including personnel involved in transportation and disposition
- Communication with all NCBFS licensees
 - Via list serve (monthly electronic newsletter)
 - Biannual newsletter

*Per the NVAC / ACIP Recommendations on Use of Vaccines outlined in the US DHHS Pandemic Influenza Plan, Part 1, Appendix D, page D-10, November 2005.

North Carolina Funeral Directors Association (NCFDA)

- Assist in the coordination of mortuary services
 - Transportation, preparation and disposition of deceased persons
 - Acquisition of funeral supplies
 - Provide clergy support
 - Provide family support
- Assist in communication with key partners
 - Provide education and updates on pandemic influenza to members of NCFDA (280 funeral service firms) by urgent fax broadcast and email
 - Serve as liaison to other organizations
 - National Funeral Directors Association
 - Fayetteville Technical Community College School of Funeral Service
 - Provide Hispanic Funeral consultation
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for mortuary concerns

Funeral Directors and Morticians Association of North Carolina, Inc (FDMANC)

- Provide education and updates on pandemic influenza to members of FDMANC (approximately 100 funeral service firms)
- Assist in communication with key partners
 - Serve as liaison to National Funeral Directors & Morticians Association, Inc.