Infectious Disease Preparedness

POLICY

It is the policy of our organization to prepare for and respond to serious outbreaks of infectious diseases in a responsible, respectful, and efficient manner. Our actions and decisions will be based on well-informed and currently available medical information. This includes:

- **Preparedness Team**: Management will designate a preparedness team to coordinate all organization efforts to prepare and respond to a serious threat of infectious disease that impacts our operations.
- **Employee Communication and Prevention Measures**: Our preparedness team will ensure that our employees know about effective prevention measures to reduce exposure, as well as how to positively address their own illness or that of co-workers, customers, or family members. This includes responses to potential quarantines, employee absences due to serious illness, and travel concerns.
- **Business Continuity**: We will identify critical business operations and methods to best address the potential disruption of the services we provide to our customers due to employee absences and/or quarantines.
- **Respectfulness**: We will address all cases of employee illness due to serious outbreaks of infectious diseases with compassion. As in all matters of employment, our intention is to comply with applicable laws and avoid illegal discrimination. We will balance our actions with currently available expert advice with the well-being of our employees and customers.

PROCEDURES

**Preparedness Team.** Management will appoint a Preparedness Team (the Team) to organize and coordinate our organization’s efforts to prepare for and respond to serious outbreaks of infectious diseases. This team will act in a responsible, respectful and efficient manner. All actions and decisions will be based on well-informed and currently available medical information.

1. **Preparedness Team Appointment**: Management appoints the Team consisting of representatives from Human Resources, Operations, Information Technology, Finance, Legal, and others as needed. This team will meet at least annually during non-outbreak times to update this plan. During serious threats, the Team will meet regularly upon becoming aware of a serious threat of an outbreak, and during the active period and recovery. This Team will advise the Executive Director and Board of Directors who will determine if our facility(ies) will remain open and in what capacity.

2. **Team Spokesperson and Communication**: Executive management will appoint a Team Spokesperson (typically the Executive Director) to lead meetings, prepare and disseminate all communications (internal and external with other agencies and the media) and coordinate actions to be taken. In the absence of the Executive Director (or at the direction of the Executive Director), a designee will be appointed. It is the Team
Spokesperson’s responsibility to partner with executive management to keep them informed of activities before they are implemented. Leaders from each functional area represented on the Team will be largely responsible for implementing agreed-upon action plans in their functional areas. The Board of Directors will be consulted as needed for decision making purposes and kept apprised on all action taken.

3. **Operations:** The Team will determine critical business functions that need to be maintained and which ones can be temporarily suspended or reduced. Operations leadership will then address:
   a. Disruption or interruption of critical business functions due to a widespread outbreak resulting in significant absences or quarantines of employees, customers, or vendors
   b. Daily needs assessment for employees in critical areas of operations, and coordination with other managers to temporarily assign staff as needed
   c. Potential supply chain issues related to critical vendors (like meal services, paper products, sanitation supplies, etc.) and *their* preparedness plans, as well as alternative vendors/resources and prudent stockpiling
   d. Alternative scheduling of work due to employee absences; consider uses of contractors, temp agencies, retirees, or other off-site support
   e. Communication with community leaders and stakeholders on what to expect – and not expect – from our operations during a temporary reduction of the services we provide
   f. Possible need for alternative work sites and coordination of related activities as warranted
   g. As necessary, coordination with health officials and OSHA standards for keeping facilities open, or in the event of reduced or temporarily ceased operations, to clean/sanitize in order to reopen

4. **Human Resources:** The Team coordinates the communication of disease prevention measures for employees and our response to impacted employees. HR will address:
   a. Coordinating an active and visible campaign for hand and cough/sneeze hygiene
   b. Encouraging employees who are sick to stay home, within reason (see next three items)
   c. Reporting to HR the possible serious illness of employees and their family members, as well as customers and vendors
   d. The medical evaluation of employee infection (suspicion of or actual), being respectful of privacy and reasonable accommodation
   e. Temporary modifications to benefits that may be necessary for extended absences/quarantines and coordinates (where possible) work-from-home, telecommute, and return to work provisions
   f. Cross-training and succession planning to keep track of who can back up whom for key positions (best practice is 3 levels deep) and to performing critical operations; identify employees who can fill in as needed temporarily
   g. Monitoring employee travel plans that may impacted by an outbreak and coordinate prudent restrictions or modifications
   h. Tracking of absences (including qualifying FMLA) and timely reporting to internal department heads and local health officials.
5. **Information Technology**: The Team addresses the particular IT needs of the organization and addresses how these may be impacted by an infectious disease event. IT will address:
   a. Identifying which IT applications and services will need to be accessed in an infectious disease event.
   b. Provisioning adequate remote access to allow users to utilize critical IT services from an alternative location or home
   c. Identifying all modes of communication with employees, ensuring availability of alternative communication modes even in a distributed work force
   d. Identifying and reviewing the preparedness plans of critical IT vendors, including backup vendors, if needed
   e. Documenting the IT recovery plans and cross-training alternate personnel to perform backup and recovery tasks
   f. Implementing and testing IT administration procedures that can be completed remotely, including back-up and recovery and vulnerability management (e.g. patching/updates)
   g. Developing policies and procedures to safeguard data from alternate location(s)

6. **Finance**: The Team will work closely with the Finance Department to evaluate the costs of proposed interventions and alternatives that may be available. The Finance leadership will then address:
   a. Temporary changes that may be needed to the process of qualifying alternative vendors
   b. Payroll operations to ensure continuity of income to employees, working with HR to address absenteeism and sick/vacation/PTO/FMLA/disability benefits as needed
   c. Banking operations and related functions in the event of a widespread outbreak that impacts the availability of financial institutions we work with, e.g., cash handling, deposits, electronic transfer of funds
   d. Cash flow based on deposits and accounts payable forecasts. Work with vendors on possible temporary alteration of payment terms
   e. Protecting the assets of the organization during serious disruption of operations

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*Disclaimer: We recommend you regularly consult the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov) for updates, recommendations and best practices you can implement to prevent the spread of illness and disease. The information presented here is not a substitute for professional medical and health care advice.*