

Introduction to POD Operations

A Point of Dispensing (also known as a POD) is a location that the Yolo County Health Department can activate in an emergency to distribute medications to the population of Yolo County. The "Gold Standard" for this task is 200,000 people in 48 hours. For a POD to function properly; many people will need to be able to work together efficiently. This Class will introduce you to the command structure of a POD, and will answer questions that may arise during your shift at a POD.

Lesson 1: POD Basics

Objectives

By The End Of This Course You Should Be Able To:

Understand what purpose a POD serves

Know when it opens and why

Explain different kinds of personnel, set-up, and security considerations for a POD

Identify some of the key concerns involved in coordinating a POD with large crowds

Know who speaks to the Media

POD is short for **Point of Dispensing**

These are specific locations that can be opened for the purpose of dispensing (distributing) medication or giving vaccinations to large populations in a public health emergency.

When Can We Expect To See One?

Locations that have been pre-screened and are available during the emergency would be opened as POD's for the purpose of dispensing medications or vaccinations and educational materials regarding the medication and disease to the population of Yolo County.

PODs are only opened when a large portion of the population is determined to be at great risk to a contagious disease or other biological agent.

POD's are operated under the authority of the Yolo County Health Officer and in coordination with the County Emergency Operations Center.

The standard that we plan for is based on an aerosolized release of Anthrax. In this situation the Medication for Anthrax is only effective if given within 48 hours. This means that we have 48 hours (from the time of the Agent's release) to get everyone taking medication. This is the shortest window of exposure which we can plan for. In the end it's always easier to scale down rather than ramp up.

12-18 hours of the original 48 will be taken up with preparation, planning, and mobilization (in essence getting authorization and supplies ready to open). This leaves us Approx. 30 hours to make sure that every person in Yolo County (Approx. 200,000) has medication and instructions to take it in their hand. Any training and preparation that can be done ahead of time should be so that everyone knows what they are doing during those first 30 hours.

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Alert & Notification

The Yolo County Health Department maintains web-based communication systems and phone tree call-downs for the specific purpose of activating its PODs. When the Health Department begins to open PODs, you may be called to a specific location to assist. Once you are contacted and agree to participate in POD efforts you will need to:

- Secure the safety of your family
- Bring one form of photo identification with you
- Report to the location given to you by the Health Department representative

There are two main notification areas:

The Facility

The Health Department's contacts at each facility will be contacted by phone and asked to unlock the facility and be available to the POD Manager and/or set-up staff upon their arrival.

The Staff

Staff for each POD will be contacted by phone and given a location to report to. It is very important that you write this information down along with any contact phone numbers just in case you become unable to report for duty.

Please be aware that you may NOT be reporting to your POD site. In most instances, POD managers will be asked to report to a staging area for a short briefing before reporting to their sites.

Lesson 2: POD Staffing & Assets

Personnel

A POD can be thought of as a ship. Just like the Navy, Army, Marines, or Air Force, it has a command structure. The leader of the operation is the POD Manager.

The POD Manager supervises the Command Staff. The Command Staff are comprised of the Public Information Contact, Safety Lead, Security Unit Deputy, Planning Unit Deputy, Logistics Unit Deputy, and the Operations Unit Deputy. The Command Staff monitor and coordinate all POD functions.

The Command Staff manage all POD staff either directly or through their Lead. They ensure that all POD staff are:

- Assigned a supervisor
- Provided with work breaks

Every team that is supervised by a Command Staff member, has one Lead. This assures that:

- Every staff member reports to only one Team Lead
- Every team lead reports to only one Command Staff member
- Every Command Staff member reports to the POD Manager

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By structuring a POD in this format we are assured that information flows up and down the "Chain of Command". Every staff member has only one supervisor; this is the person they get their direction from and give their concerns and requests to.

At the beginning of the shift you will be given a Job Action Sheet (examples are given in the links to the right). This sheet tells you who to report to and gives you a synopsis of what you will be doing. You will also be given "Just In Time" training which will explain any specifics you need to know about the POD.

Every POD follows basic Incident Command System Principles. The most important thing for you to remember is that in an Incident Command System, in addition to who you report to, if anything out of the ordinary should happen you will need to document it (be sure to note the time, what happened, and what actions were taken).

Staffing Structure

As a staff member you will either be reporting to your Team Lead or (if you are a Team Lead) you will be reporting to one of the Command Staff Personnel.

Never try to report directly to the POD Manager! This person gathers information from the Command Staff and reports to the Health Department. If you need to deliver information to a Command Staff member, let your Lead know and they will relay the message at their next briefing.

Every person has a station; you should never leave your station without requesting relief from another staff member (this can be done through your Supervisor).

Lead and Command staff members will be responsible for scheduling lunches, breaks, and shift changes. If you have any special needs, please speak to your Supervisor. If you are a supervisory staff member try, to be responsive to the individual needs of your staff.

Jobs in the POD...

All Yolo County PODs are designed to work with every staff position. Depending on the circumstance, some positions may be omitted. For example: a POD that will only be open for one shift/one day may not have a planning section.

A work flow chart (similar to the one displayed on the previous page) will ALWAYS be provided to the POD on the day of opening. If you are unsure of who you report to, you will be able to check the chart or ask supervisory staff upon your arrival.

Below is a list of staff positions with a short description of what the positions function is:

- **Sign In/Out**– Make sure staff sign in and out upon arrival and departure to the site (may also be instructed to have staff fill out paperwork).
- **Equipment/Supplies**– Make sure that Equipment and Supplies are stored together and easy to find, reports depleting stores to their command for re-order.

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- **Inventory Control**– Keeps track of medication stores and how fast they are moving through the POD, reports depleting stores to their command for re-order BEFORE THE POD RUNS OUT!!!!
- **Griage (Greeting & Triage)**– Greets patients at the entrance, may be instructed to look for sick patients, begin line control at the door, and/or hand out screening forms.
- **Medical Screening**– Will be given lists and information to ask to patients and where to send them based on their answers (ie: Education, Medical Consult).
- **Medical Consult**– Usually someone with Medical Background who can answer more complicated questions regarding health concerns (This position may not be available during an emergency, but a phone number will be provided for you to give out or use).
- **Education**– Provides the appropriate educational handout for the medication/agent to the patient (will be pre-screened for which medication at Medical Screening).
- **Dispensing/Vaccination**– Hands patient the medication that corresponds with their educational materials.
- **Interviewing/Checkout**– Collects any and all materials from patients that are supposed to stay at the POD.
- **First Aid**– “Just in Case” of injury at the POD.
- **Interior Security**– Stand guard at the interior operations in the POD (make sure no one runs off with meds, help staff with intoxicated patients, general security).
- **Traffic Control**– “Keeps the peace” in the parking lot, directs patients to open spaces in the appropriate areas, if a major street is involved, make sure patients make it safely across the street. Works with Security.
- **Mental Health**– Assists POD staff with unruly patients, aggressive patients, and/or mentally disabled patients.
- **Runner**– used by POD staff as message runners, crowd controllers, supply runners, and/or break staff for restroom breaks.
- **Translators**– Translates materials and/or the screening process for patients.
- **Data Management**– In charge of sorting and/or entering into a computer any and all paperwork at the POD.

Staff Responsibilities

Managers and Leads

- Oversee POD function
- Authorize changes
- Responsible for information flow
- Make sure your staff have the supplies they need to do their jobs

All Staff

- Monitor client flow
- Documentation
- Dispense

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- Go to your assigned supervisor to request supplies, staff, breaks and/or problems

All staff members should be aware of what is happening in the POD during their shift.

- If you see a disruptive person – send a runner for some help
- If you need more supplies – ask your Supervisor
- If you observe a patient bottleneck – inform your Supervisor so that they can address it
- If you need a break – inform your Supervisor so that they can arrange a replacement person for you

Assets Provided To The POD

The Health Department will provide supplies and medications to the POD. These can include any or all of the following:

- **Computer-** If a computer is provided to the POD, special instructions regarding its usage will be provided to the Data Management team.
- **POD in a Box-** A set of seven containers that the Health Department would send to your POD. It contains items like tape, flashlights, extension cords, trash bags, clipboards, pens, highlighters, gloves, masks, goggles, and identification vests.
- **Administrative Supplies-** In addition to the basic administrative supplies that come in the POD in a Box, your POD may be supplied with extra reams of paper, pens, tape, and other items you may need to keep your POD functioning.
- **Signage-** Signs are a necessity for patients to understand where they must go. You will either be provided with pre-printed signs or markers and poster sized paper to create your own.
- **Maps-** Every Yolo County POD has maps of multiple layout options. You will be provided with a map of the layout being used for this POD.
- **Traffic Cones-** will be provided to your POD for effective traffic control.
- **Unit-Measured Medication Packages or Vaccines-** All medications will be re-packed by the Receipt Storage and Staging (RSS) facility before they arrive at your POD into individual unit dosages. The POD staff need only distribute.
- **Medical Supplies (if needed)-** If it is necessary for you to wear a mask or gloves, you will be provided with these items. Always follow the wear instructions provided to you by your supervisor.

Lesson 3: POD Design & Set-up

How to Set-up a POD

There are FOUR main areas to the set-up of a POD:

The Yolo County Health Department has already done work regarding all four of these areas for every POD in its contingency.

1. **Organization of Staff -** Personnel are being trained and asked to provide methods of contact so that during an emergency we can easily segregate those who have been trained from those who have not.

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2. **POD Design** - the physical layout of the POD has already been developed in the form of maps. These can be used "as is" by the POD Command Staff or augmented to make the POD run more efficiently.
3. **Health and Safety** - has been written and is addressed during the "Just in Time" training. It has special sections regarding the safety of the staff working in the POD as well as ensuring that we follow protocols for safely distributing emergency medications and/or vaccines.
4. **Security** - Plans are developed by Law Enforcement for every site and released the day of the event.

Once these areas are set-up, a POD can function for multiple days. It is VERY important that (unless otherwise instructed by the POD Command Staff) you follow any and all written processes very closely. This will ensure that the POD runs smoothly. It is important to be aware of your surroundings and work with your supervisor to make any adjustments necessary to serve the population efficiently.

Pay Special Attention To:

Supplies -Where are they located?

Clinic -vs- Staff Areas -Which areas are "off limits" to patients?

Crowd Control -How are patients being funneled through the POD?

Layout

Every location has been set-up via map ahead of time by Health Department staff. The set-up that is to be used will be decided based on the type of emergency and the number of people that need to get through the POD. That map will be given to you so that you know where everything goes during POD operation. If anything is changed you will need to make a note of it.

There are four basic ways to set up a POD.

1. A **Clinical Model** is used when there are ample amounts of time to get medications to patients (It is reminiscent of visiting the doctor's office).
2. **Express Models** are developed for when high patient flow through a POD is required to meet the needs of the area (i.e. we have a very limited amount of time to get medication to our population).
3. The **Self-Screening Model** is helpful in areas of lower populations where there are few volunteers to staff the POD. Patients segregate themselves through the use of signage and lines into groups for medication dispensing.
4. A **Drive-Thru** is designed so that patients do not have to exit their vehicle to receive medications.

Command staff on site may choose to change the layout of a POD if the set-up is not functioning efficiently. The Health Department may contact the POD and ask them to set-up according to a different layout to assist in patient throughput in high traffic areas.

If you are part of a relief shift at the POD try to familiarize yourself with all of the items listed so that no matter what job you are asked to fill, you know where everything is and

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how this POD is functioning. If the previous shift has made changes to the layout, be sure to make a note of it on your map since the maps are of the original layout.

Security & Parking

Every POD site has a specific security plan. This is a very basic plan written jointly by the Yolo County Health Department and local Law Enforcement. Be sure to listen to the security staff working that day for any changes to the POD's security plan.

When you arrive at the POD, you will be given a badge with one of three colors on it:

Red is Restricted Access and is reserved for interior security, law enforcement, and Command Staff

Areas with Red Access would include the Incident Command Post, the Public Information Area, and the Medication Storage Area.

Yellow is Moderate Access and is reserved for POD staff and the media

Areas with Yellow Access would include the staff break area, Pharmacy, Mental Health, and First Aid

Green is Open Access and is reserved for General Volunteers

Areas with Green Access would include the POD dispensing area and parking lots

Parking maps will be provided for every POD. These maps have designated areas:

- **Staff Parking** should be the farthest away from the POD so that patients have to walk less.
- **Patient Parking** should be the closest to the POD and the largest area.
- **Ambulance Parking** is usually the most easily accessible to the POD for quick usage.
- **Bus** is a loading and unloading area close to the front door of the POD.
- **Delivery** is an area that will be used by a truck to deliver assets to the POD.
- **Pet Area** is a fenced in area that pets can be temporarily placed in while patients are in line.

Lesson 4: More to Think About

Challenges

When lots of people are in a small place during a stressful situation “something” is bound to happen. It will take the efforts of the entire POD staff (as a team) to make sure that everything runs smoothly!

Maintain Line Control

Effective line control is a MUST. If you have ever been to an amusement park you have already encountered different forms of extremely effective line control designed to get you to your end destination. Backs of chairs, caution tape, and arrows taped onto the floor are all effective tools.

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Assign a role for all volunteers

Most volunteers will be assigned to your location by the County. However, you may have volunteers show up at your location to "help". Runner positions are very good staffing positions for volunteers, especially since you will not know what that person's qualifications are. If you are a Command Staff member or Lead you will need to work together to make sure that volunteers get an assigned position.

Follow chain of command for help

If you are experiencing a huge increase of patients at your station, tell your Lead (by way of a runner) and they will work with other staff to resolve it.

Be Polite!

Lots of patients will be frazzled. Security staff can help you with problem patients. NEVER LEAVE YOUR POST TO GO AND GET THEM!!! Use the word of the day (which will be given to you during the "Just in Time" training) to ask for assistance. Remember to always "Be Nice"; your attitude will directly influence the attitude of those around you.

Special Considerations

Mental Health Support Services

- Intoxicated/Disruptive/Traumatized
- Mentally Handicapped
- Co-Worker stress
- Behavioral Screening or anxiety

There will be at least one Mental Health staff at your POD. These people can help you with Intoxicated, Agitated, Disruptive, Traumatized or Mentally Handicapped persons. They are also very effective in monitoring the Mental Health of workers on site and screening those patients in line for potential problems.

Special Needs

- Physically Handicapped
- Elderly
- Children
- Non-English Speakers (Monolingual)

Special Needs Patients are the responsibility of everyone. If you spot someone who is Physically Handicapped, Elderly, or has a lot of children notify a Runner so that they can offer assistance to that person. There is translation staff on hand for Non-English speaking patients.

Media

Never talk to them!!! ALWAYS REFER THEM TO THE PUBLIC INFORMATION CONTACT or THE POD MANAGER!!! This person will be receiving the latest news from the Health Department and will know what is allowed to be talked about and what is not. If they do not have the answer they can refer the Media to someone who does!

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Slow Periods

- Check in with supervisor to request a break to get food or use restroom
- Organize your station
- Re-stock supplies
- Keep work area clean
- Communicate with your Supervisor

When there is a break in the patient flow take full advantage of it! Ask for a restroom break or a food break. Request refills of your station supplies and clean your area. Nobody wants to receive medication from a dirty area!

Closing

The Health Department maintains contact with all of its POD's. When the Health Department has issued the "OK to close" order your POD will

- Close all of it's doors
- Help whatever patient remain in the facility
- Start breaking down the POD

The Health Department will send a representative to collect any unused medications, supplies, and all paperwork. Please have these items neatly stacked and ready to load in the center of the room.

Each facility needs to be returned to the state it was in when the Health Department opened the POD. This includes sweeping the floors, wiping down tables, removing any tape on the floors, and general straightening up.

When the POD is authorized to close, all staff are expected to help with the following:

Return any unused materials for inventory

Collect all paperwork

Help survey and clean the facility

Participate in Debrief

Turn in your ID Badge and Vest

REMEMBER to Sign-In and Sign-Out

Once the facility is ready, all staff will meet in one area and everyone will be given a chance to voice what they thought worked well and what didn't. This is called a Debrief. Please make sure to participate in the debrief so that the Health Department knows how to make this POD function smoother in the future. All responses will be documented.

Before you leave make sure to return your ID badge and vest and sign the sign out sheet. The Health Department is responsible for you while you are signed in, always remember to sign in upon arrival to the POD and sign out upon your departure from the POD.