

# WHAT TO INCLUDE IN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT PLANS



## COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES LICENSING PROGRAM

The primary purpose of outbreak management is to stop the further transmission of an illness within a care home, and protect residents from the serious harms of the disease. The two most common and serious communicable diseases that affect residential care homes are influenza and norovirus, thus most outbreak measures and plans have been designed around the characteristics of these diseases. However, outbreaks may be caused by other diseases, and sometimes modifications to the response plans are needed based on the specific disease or the resident population or building characteristics. It is important to develop an outbreak management plan for your care home in advance of a disease outbreak occurring. Be prepared! The following information should assist you in creating a comprehensive outbreak plan for the persons in your care.

### Elements of an Outbreak Management Plan

When creating a plan, consider the following key areas that should be addressed:

- **Monitoring and Surveillance**
  - Are staff educated about communicable diseases (especially influenza and norovirus) and can they recognize it in residents?
  - Do they know when and who to report new cases to?
  - Who in the facility will collect specimens?
  - During an outbreak, who will keep track of new cases in the facility on a daily basis?
- **Coordination**
  - During an outbreak, coordination of the many outbreak activities is an important function. Is there a clear structure or mechanism for outbreak management in the care home, with roles and responsibilities defined for each of your staff?
- **Managing Ill Residents**
  - How will you:
    - Isolate a symptomatic resident?
    - Ensure that staff have access to personal protective equipment, such as gloves, gowns, and masks?
    - Provide necessary care to the resident?
  - How will medical assessment and treatment be provided in a timely way (e.g. early antiviral treatment)?
- **Protecting Other Residents – Individual Measures**
  - Immunization is a key protective measure for residents and should be offered to unimmunized residents and staff in advance and during an outbreak. Is there a plan to maximize immunization access for residents and staff?
  - Antiviral prophylaxis is usually recommended in the event of a confirmed influenza outbreak for all residents. Is there a plan to ensure prompt distribution of antivirals to all residents in the care home?
- **Physical Environment – Housekeeping**
  - What is the plan for enhanced cleaning prior to and during an outbreak in common areas, high-touch areas, resident rooms of the facility?
- **Social Environment – Staffing**
  - An important issue is ensuring that non-immunized staff take antiviral medication during an influenza outbreak. What is the plan for ensuring that the outbreak staffing algorithm is followed?

- Often, cohorting of staff to outbreak areas, tray service for residents in their rooms and other restrictions result in a need for higher levels of staffing than usual. What is the plan for ensuring that staffing numbers in the facility will be adequate during an outbreak?
- **Social Environment – Activities and Dining**
  - During an outbreak, social activities and communal dining are often cancelled to prevent further spread among residents and staff. Tray service for dining is a usual measure. Social gatherings are usually cancelled although family members can in most cases visit individual residents in their rooms. What is the plan for implementing restrictions to social activities and dining, including staffing and communication with families and staff?
- **Social Environment – Communication**
  - During an outbreak, communication about the outbreak status and control measures is very important to ensure that all staff, visitors and residents are aware of the changes and actions they are being asked to do. Someone will need to be the contact for the Public Health and Communicable Disease programs. In some cases, there may be media interest in the outbreak going on in the facility therefore it is important that an individual in the facility act as the media contact. Is there a communication plan to ensure that the key messages are communicated to everyone who needs to know? (Note: This should include signage in the care home, as well as other means depending on the unique characteristics of the persons in care.)

*Prepared with input from Dr. D. Hoyano, Medical Health Officer October 2015*

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