USING THIS GUIDE

Local government managers should prepare their communities by reviewing their emergency response plans for pandemic events. Begin by discussing these prompts with your leadership team and partner organizations and pair this discussion guide with frequently updated information noted in the **Key Resources** section.

PROMPTS FOR DISCUSSION

CHAINS OF COMMAND FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

The chain of command will be different in a public health emergency than during natural disasters or human-created crises.

Which organization will take the lead on coordinating local response?

Who will be directing specific steps to follow for best medical practices?

Where does funding for emergency response come from?

Which organization will take the lead or "speak first" in health-related communication? How will other organizations disseminate that information to their specific audiences?

Which levels of government will have a role in determining and enforcing movement restrictions or quarantines?

How are you establishing a relationship with your public health agency now so you receive information before it is released to the general public during a response?

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Local governments should focus on promoting timely, verified information for their communities during the heightened media coverage and public anxiety over a pandemic event.

Who will be the spokesperson to take the lead on crafting communication messages prior to and during an emergency event?

How will you ensure messages circulate to firstline communicators throughout your organization, such as customer service?

How can you educate your community regarding basic guidelines that help slow the spread of illness, and general emergency preparedness guidelines for individuals and households?

What segments of your population may require specialized outreach? What other governmental organizations can you partner with to provide translation services during an emergency event?

How will you help to dispel misinformation about the origin, spread, or impact of the virus, including combating stigma in relation to Chinese and other Asian and Asian American communities?

image courtesy of CDC

POTENTIAL GAPS IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Review your existing emergency preparedness and response plans and identify potential gaps for a pandemic emergency.

What are the basic plans for family or households who may have COVID-19-infected members, including lodging/quarantine for household animals?

What is your contingency plan if key local government employees contract the illness?

How would restricted movement directives or large-scale quarantines impact your community?

How would national media attention impact your current crisis communication plan and staffing?

Do you have access to necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) as identified by your local public health authority?

Are you following CDC and your local public health agency's guidance on mass gatherings?

PREPARING YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE

Several steps can be taken to prepare your workforce to respond to a pandemic outbreak.

How can you increase routine surface cleaning of public places and all regularly touched surfaces and objects?

Are you actively encouraging all employees who are sick to stay home, even for mild illnesses, and removing doctor note requirements?

Where can you adjust leave policies to be flexible for public health emergencies, including permitting employees to stay home to care for sick family members?

How are you preparing your employees and elected officials for the possibility of long-term teleworking, including the potential for rescheduling/remote public meetings?

Are your executive team, human resources department, and employee assistance program prepared to provide additional resources to protect the mental health needs of your employees during a response?

KEY RESOURCES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)'s situation summary page for COVID-19 provides the latest updates on source, spread, response, and recommendations: **https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html**
- National Institutes of Health (NIH): **https://www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus**
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): **https://www.fema.gov**
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA): **https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19**
- World Health Organization (WHO): **https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019**

Access ICMA's complete COVID-19 coverage, including links to essential resources, additional recommendations, and response updates, here: https://icma.org/coronavirus

Questions or suggestions?
Contact ICMA research at surveyresearch@icma.org

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