

RAND RESEARCH AREAS

THE ARTS
 CHILD POLICY
 CIVIL JUSTICE
 EDUCATION
 ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
 HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
 INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
 NATIONAL SECURITY
 POPULATION AND AGING
 PUBLIC SAFETY
 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
 SUBSTANCE ABUSE
 TERRORISM AND
 HOMELAND SECURITY
 TRANSPORTATION AND
 INFRASTRUCTURE
 WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE

This fact sheet is part of the
 RAND Corporation research
 brief series. RAND fact sheets
 summarize published, peer-
 reviewed documents.

Headquarters Campus
 1776 Main Street
 P.O. Box 2138
 Santa Monica, California
 90407-2138
 TEL 310.393.0411
 FAX 310.393.4818

© RAND 2008

A Step Forward in Accountability for Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Developing Standards for Mass Antibiotic Dispensing

For U.S. public health emergency planners, the prospect of a large-scale anthrax attack poses a nightmare scenario. Perhaps the biggest challenge during such an attack would be getting medicine to everyone in a community within the critical first 48 hours. Building the capability to respond to such an event is the focus of the Cities Readiness Initiative, a program created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help metropolitan areas increase their capacity to deliver medical supplies during a large-scale bioterrorist event. Despite a significant federal investment in strengthening preparedness, the government and the public lack standards by which to evaluate whether this investment has increased metropolitan areas' ability to respond to this challenge. To address this gap, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services asked RAND to develop performance standards for dispensing antibiotics and other lifesaving medical countermeasures on a large scale over a short period.

The study team drew on several information sources to develop the standards: a review of the scientific literature, consultation with subject-matter experts, mathematical models, and data on current practices. Because the standards are intended to apply to communities that range in size from very large metropolitan areas, such as New York City, to smaller communities, such as Dover, Delaware, the study team avoided a one-size-fits-all prescription and instead proposed standards that guide states and cities through an objective and auditable process that provides each community with customized requirements for such components as the number of points of distribution (PODs) and staffing levels. If adopted, the standards would require grantees to meet the following criteria:

- *Number and location of PODs:* Demonstrate that they have used an objective process (defined by the standards) to estimate how many PODs a community is likely to require to dispense an initial regimen of antibiotics within the first 48 hours of an emergency.
- *Internal operations at PODs:* Demonstrate that POD staff can perform a set of essential functions, including directing clients through the POD, deciding which medication to dispense, disseminating information about the medication, and dispensing the medication.
- *POD staffing:* Use a process defined by the standards to estimate community-specific staffing requirements based on estimates of hourly POD users, and test the process using time studies.
- *POD security:* Ensure sufficient coordination with law enforcement and adequate police presence at each POD location.

The recommendations represent the first attempt to develop evidence-based performance standards for public health emergency preparedness. In developing these standards, RAND has attempted to define in detail, for the first time, what a prepared community looks like—at least with respect to one critical capability. The recommended standards complement earlier RAND work to develop tools to assess health departments' operational capabilities, which are included in current CDC program guidance. Additional work will involve developing similar standards for other essential areas of preparedness.

This fact sheet is based on Nelson C, Chan EW, Chandra A, Sorensen P, Willis HH, Comanor K, Park H, Ricci KA, Caldarone LB, Shea M, Zambrano JA, and Hansell L, *Recommended Infrastructure Standards for Mass Antibiotic Dispensing*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TR-553-DHHS, 2008, 131 pp., available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR553.

Office of Congressional Relations | 703-413-1100 x5320 | ocr@rand.org | www.rand.org/congress

This fact sheet was written by David M. Adamson. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

RAND Offices

Santa Monica, CA • Washington, DC • Pittsburgh, PA • New Orleans, LA/Jackson, MS • Doha, QA • Cambridge, UK • Brussels, BE



HEALTH

THE ARTS
CHILD POLICY
CIVIL JUSTICE
EDUCATION
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
NATIONAL SECURITY
POPULATION AND AGING
PUBLIC SAFETY
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
TERRORISM AND
HOMELAND SECURITY
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE

This PDF document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world.

Support RAND

[Browse Books & Publications](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore [RAND Health](#)

View [document details](#)

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Unauthorized posting of RAND PDFs to a non-RAND Web site is prohibited. RAND PDFs are protected under copyright law. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see [RAND Permissions](#).