

Fact Sheet: Medical Countermeasures (MCM) and Points of Dispensing (POD) Basics

What are MCMs?

MCMs are medical countermeasures, such as vaccines, antiviral drugs, antibiotics, antitoxins, and chemical antidotes, used to effectively prevent, mitigate, or treat adverse health effects of an intentional, accidental, or naturally occurring public health emergency.

What is a POD?

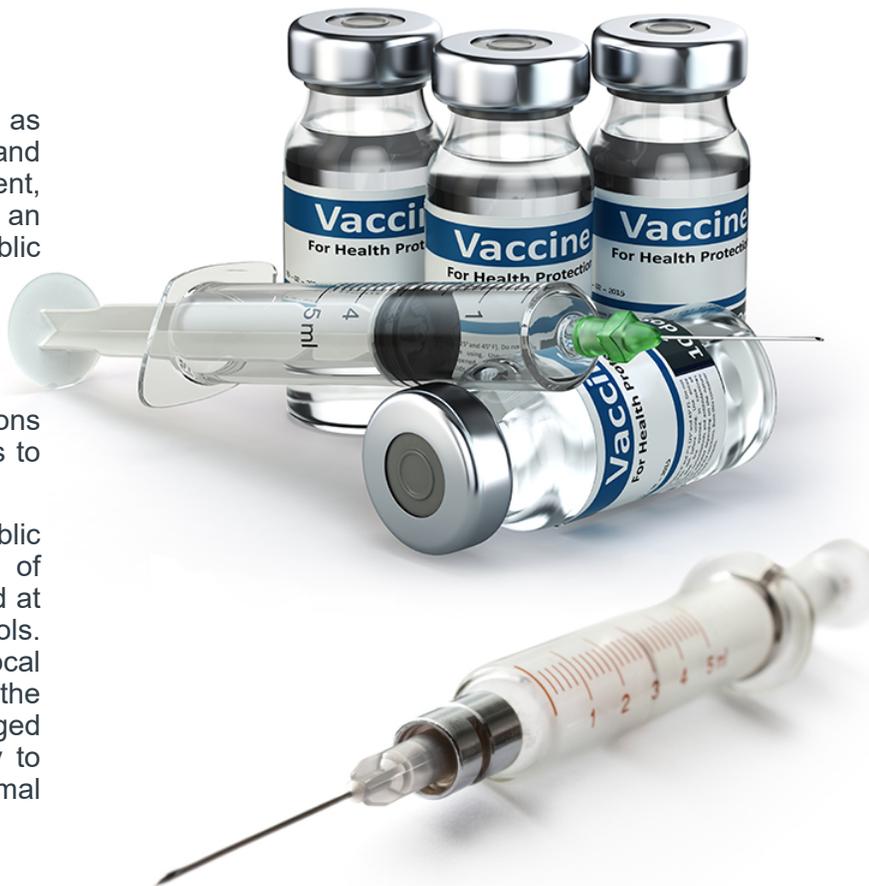
POD or points of dispensing, are community locations in which state and local agencies dispense MCMs to the public during a public health emergency.

To aid in rapidly dispensing MCMs to the local public health department will plan on using two types of PODs, open and closed. **Open PODs** are located at large public locations such as arenas or schools. These dispensing locations are operated by local public health departments to distribute MCMs to the public. **Closed PODs** are sites staffed and managed by partner organizations to dispense MCMs only to their own populations while continuing normal operations during an emergency.

How do MCMs get to communities?

The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) manages the MCMs at the federal level for use in public health emergencies. If a state experiences a public health emergency, the governor can request SNS resources to assist with the response after state and local resources have been exhausted. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and CDC make the decision whether to deploy SNS assets or other assistance to the affected state. The state will coordinate with local jurisdictions to distribute the MCMs from SNS to affected areas.

- Federal officials determine the type of MCMs and deliver them to state public health departments
- State public health departments distribute MCMs to local public health departments, hospitals, or, occasionally, directly to open or closed PODs. These public health departments will determine the strategy to dispense MCMs depending upon the type of exposure (chemical, biological, or radiological).
- Local public health departments dispense MCMs to dispensing partners and the public through a coordinated system using both open and closed PODs.
 - Note: MCMs needed for treatment may go directly from SNS to health care facilities.





What does it mean for a health care facility to be a closed POD partner?

Local public health departments want to collaborate with health care facilities in closed POD planning. Health care organizations that function as closed PODs can provide medication or immunizations to their staff, family, patients, and residents and help ensure that their workforce can continue operations during a public health emergency. This will help reduce the number of people using open PODs.

How can my health care organization become a closed POD partner?

An important step in planning is to contact your local public health department and tell them your organization is interested in becoming a closed POD partner. The public health department is often responsible for the dispensing of MCMs to the community and they will want to assist you in protecting the health care workforce and maintaining health care operations.

Your local public health representatives should walk you through the process of closed POD planning, explaining roles and responsibilities, as well as benefits and incentives available. Specifically, your local public health agency can:

- Inform health care partners of available planning resources and recommendations.
- Maintain up-to-date leadership and planning committee contact information.
- Gather partner feedback, exchange information, and provide reciprocal assistance to keep partners engaged.
- Address partner concerns about resource limitations by encouraging interaction and resource sharing.
- Support progressive dialogue between partners to improve processes.