

Appendix O

Public Health Response Teams

Public Health Response Teams

External/Internal Response

Since the disastrous events of September and October of 2001, an emphasis on public health preparedness has been identified as an area of needing improvement. The development of response teams is critical to improve the county's response to a potential disaster or bioterrorism event.

In November 2002, pre-event and post-event Smallpox plans were submitted to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Part of the composition of the pre-event plan was to identify individuals who would voluntarily receive the smallpox vaccine in the beginning of Phase I of the national Smallpox vaccination campaign. The entire Smallpox vaccination campaign is three phases. Phase II consists of individuals involved in EMS, Fire, Police and all other healthcare providers. Phase III is the general public.

There was a need to identify teams of individuals in the community to assist with the investigation, contact tracing, and medical management of individuals who may contract smallpox disease. The development of two teams occurred; a Public Health Response Team and a Local Hospital Response Team. The objective was to vaccinate a total of fifty individuals between both response teams. The vaccination clinics were held in March 2003.

The total number of individuals selected for the Public Health Response Team at the Garrett County Health Department was 12 individuals. This PHRT with the respective numbers is as follows; Registered Nurses (8), Registered Sanitarians (2), Law Enforcement (1), Physician (1).

The total number of individuals selected for the Local Hospital Response Team at Garrett County Memorial Hospital was 5 individuals. This LHRT with the respective numbers is as follows; Administration (2), and Registered Nurses (5).

Internal Response

The Health Department can assemble an epidemiological team to conduct an investigation rapidly. The number of individuals available for an investigation is variable and directly relates to the size of the disease outbreak. The team can consist of a two to three persons to twenty persons. Individuals serving on this team may consist of Registered Nurses, Registered Sanitarians, Physician and other healthcare professionals.

Appendix P

Specimen Handling Protocol

Garrett County Health Department Specimen Handling Protocol

The Garrett County Health Department has several methods for the handling of specimen(s) collected within the health department and in the community. The method of shipping depends on the severity, importance and dynamics of the event. The packaging and transport of specimen(s) (i.e., infectious agents) is completed as required by applicable regulations.

Following are methods which the Garrett County Health Department uses to ship specimen(s) to DHMH Laboratories in Baltimore, Maryland.

Private Courier

Specimens collected in the Garrett County Health Department Personal Health clinic, such as blood serologies and gonorrhea/chlamydia cultures are routinely shipped by private courier. These specimen(s) are picked up by the courier on days selected by the Garrett County Health Department for pick-up. The courier delivers specimen(s) to the Allegany County Health Department's Regional Lab the day after the specimen(s) are picked up at the Garrett County Health Department. The Allegany County Regional Lab sends the specimen(s) from their laboratory location via courier to DHMH Laboratories for testing. The timeframe for delivery of specimen(s) is approximately 24-36 hours using this method. **This shipping method is used in non-emergency situations.**

An alternative shipping method involves a coordinated and collaborative effort with Garrett County Memorial Hospital, the long term care facilities in the county and health department. Specimen(s) are transported from the LTC facilities to the local hospital. Then specimen(s) are transported to the Western Maryland Hospital Laboratory at the Memorial Campus. The Western Maryland Hospital personnel then deliver the specimen(s) to the Allegany County Health Department Regional Laboratories for delivery to the DHMH Laboratories via courier. **This shipping method is used in non-emergency situations.**

Health Department Transport

Specimen(s) collected by the Garrett County Health Department and shipped using this method may or may not have a higher level of importance for delivery. This is situational and depends on the event. Employees from the Environmental Health Department deliver water specimens once a week to the Allegany County Health Department Regional Lab. If other specimen(s) need shipped to DHMH Laboratories and the use of Environmental Health personnel is logistically possible then this method is used. This may decrease the turn around time for test

results. Approximate turn around time for test results using this transport method is 24 hours. **This method is used in non-emergency and moderately urgent situations.**

In the past, local health department employees have traveled to Baltimore to deliver specimen(s) to DHMH Laboratories Administration when urgency existed for the test results in less than 24 hours. **This method is used in urgent emergency situations.**

Chain of Custody

Specimens that require chain-of-custody cannot be delivered by the lab courier. Specimen(s) collected by the FBI, other law enforcement agency, or HazMat team, should be delivered by them to the DHMH Laboratories. If specimen(s) are collected by agencies other than above, a request is made by the Health Officer or designated health department personnel to the Maryland State Police by calling 301-387-1101 for the transport of the specimen(s). A chain of custody log form is used. See DHMH Form 4281 on the following page. Once the request is made, the custody form is completed and included with the specimen for transport to DHMH Laboratories Administration. Outside of the package must be labeled "**BT-Room 3E-7**" so the specimen arrives at the correct location of the laboratory. **This method is used in highly urgent emergency situations or a bioterrorism event and the tests results are needed in less than 24 hours.**

DHMH Laboratory coverage is provided 24/7 including holidays. If suspected BT isolates are being sent to the DHMH Laboratory, the laboratory should be notified by calling **(410) 767-6140** to alert the staff of the approximate time of arrival if it will occur after normal work hours. If you do not receive an answer on this number, call **(410) 302-9667; (410) 825-2610; or (410) 591-6785** in that order.