

10 Key Organizational Infectious Disease Readiness Components

An organization's preparation strategy should leverage 10 key components – all of which are critical to sustaining operations during an infectious disease event.

- 1) **Leadership/Decision Making** – An Infectious Disease Planning and Coordination Unit needs to be implemented as a part of the existing Business Continuity Planning (BCP) function. This helps ensure an organization has a well-defined structure in place for decisions to be made in a timely and effective manner. Without such a team in place, there could be long delays caused by indecision or a lack of clarity as to who's authorized to do what in an infectious disease event.
- 2) **Education** – Organizations need to educate employees as to what is expected from them in an infectious disease event. For example, are people expected to stay home? Do operating procedures change with a 30 to 40 percent absentee rate? Employees should also be made aware of knowledge about prevention and treatment.
- 3) **Public/Private Partnerships** – Develop and maintain relationships with trading partners and critical stakeholders, such as unions and public health agencies. These relationships could prove beneficial in an infectious disease event, as it can give an organization priority access to necessary supplies. It is also important to discover if it is worth the time and effort to build these relationships.
- 4) **Communication** – The response plan and approach need to be communicated to employees and families, customers, suppliers, and partners. Organizations also need to figure out the means by which they will get the message out. It is recommended organizations have pre-written messages for specific scenarios so they know what is going to be sent out should an infectious disease event present itself.
- 5) **Telecommuting** – Depending on how an infectious disease event is impacting an organization, allowing employees to work from home could be the best way to ensure continued operation with limited disruption. When allowing employees to work from home there are several factors that need to be considered, such as laptop configurations, networking concerns, and security of home computers. Tests should be run to make sure it is possible for a high percentage of the staff to telecommute without any issues.
- 6) **Risk and Legal** – Prior to an infectious disease event, organizations need to identify likely threats to decrease the risk of a damaging situation. This can be done by developing risk mitigation policies and procedures. Legal considerations also need to be put into place when creating policies, such as telecommuting, to ensure requirements are fair and reasonable.
- 7) **HR Policies and Procedures** – In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, organizations need clear and concise HR policies and procedures in place. For example, employees should know their rights if infected in terms of sick time and medical leave. It is also important to consider the legal aspect of these policies to ensure they're fair and equitable.

- 8) **Trading Partners** – If the situation is serious enough it could be difficult to get supplies in the door. For this reason, it is important to review demand, distribution, and production plans, and link strategies with key trading partners to come up with a plan of attack for an infectious disease event.
- 9) **Employee Wellness** – If an infectious disease outbreak occurs, organizations need to be concerned about the well-being of employees. This should include reviewing contracts with health plans and provider networks to determine coverage and provision of services such as vaccinations and access to medical facilities. All employees should know what is available to them if infected, and where they can seek treatment.
- 10) **Business Processes** – To avoid shutdown during an infectious disease outbreak, organizations need to develop policies and processes that enable them to maintain operational effectiveness. For example, if employees are infected it is important to decide whether the organization will use temps.