

'PODPocket' mobile app and standard guidance help Kentucky counties establish PODs

 cidrap.umn.edu/practice/podpocket-mobile-app-and-standard-guidance-help-kentucky-counties-establish-pods

More from :
Kentucky

Background

Public health agencies, especially those that serve high-population areas, must plan to establish Points of Dispensing (PODs) that can distribute pharmaceutical prophylaxis or vaccine to people following a biological incident or outbreak of infectious illness. Managing a POD can involve setting up complex infrastructure within a short period of time, implementing procedures to quickly and efficiently provide vaccination or prophylaxis, and incorporating volunteers with variable training. Public health agencies across Kentucky are responsible for establishing PODs within their jurisdictions with little overlap in standards or processes across regions.

Specific issues

- **Lack of common infrastructure for POD planning.** Providing mutual aid and assistance across jurisdictions was complicated by the fact that Kentucky's local health agencies operate under different response protocols.
- **Different operating standards across regions.** In order to establish effective PODs, health agencies across Kentucky required a common language and a means by which to cooperate in preparedness activities.

The practice

A team, which included the Kentucky Department for Public Health Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Coordinator and staff from Barren River District Health Department and Lake Cumberland District Health Department, created POD operating guidelines, along with an online app called "PODPocket," to promote emergency preparedness coordination and mutual support throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Development of standardized guidelines came after staff from Kentucky's SNS program raised concerns about how PODs were not planned and operated at a consistent level across the state. The guidelines built on Kentucky's experience establishing multiple PODs during H1N1, along with lessons learned from community drills and exercises.

Because POD guidance was intended to be accessible at any time to Kentucky's public health professionals, the team developed a Web-based app that planners could access on their phones and tablets. PODPocket allows mobile access to tools for setting up and running a POD, including standardized layouts for clinic flow, job action sheets coordinated with the standard operating guidelines for Kentucky PODs, and documentation forms. Future versions of this app may also include training videos.

What made this practice possible?

- **Collaboration between team members**, to include Barren River District Health Department, Lake Cumberland District Health Department, and the KDPH SNS Coordinator, in collaboration with the University of Louisville School of Public Health and Information Sciences Center for Health Hazards Preparedness, and the University of Louisville J.B. Speed School of Engineering.
- **Funding** from the Department of Homeland Security and the National Institute for Hometown Security

- **Vetting** of the online app by potential users from Kentucky's local health departments, as well as regionally by SNS partners from surrounding states.

Results

- **POD guidance and practices were standardized** across Kentucky.
- **Planners and responders became skilled at using technology** to support their in-the-field activities.
- **The online app minimized in-person orientation and training time** for people operating a POD.
- **Communication across jurisdictions increased** as planners exchanged creative ideas for adapting traditional practices to the new technological format.

Notes

Planners are exploring interactive options for PODPocket, including means by which POD staff can view role-specific training videos and send clinic documentation to the state online. This latter option would assist workflow within each POD, and it would also provide state coordinators with an operational picture of POD infrastructure within Kentucky.