

## How to Use This Manual

The questions: Would an avian flu pandemic consume the U.S. in five weeks time as estimated by the Center for Disease Control? Can a bird flu pandemic circle the globe in three months, as predicted by the World Health Organization?

Just the prospect that the answers to these questions is yes is forcing state and local governments to recognize the severity of the problem and the potential crippling of communities caused by a pandemic.

The worst-case prediction is that 30-40 percent of the U.S. workforce would be affected by an outbreak of avian flu. Your government must have a valid plan to cope with this potentially disastrous situation. We know the importance of having contingency plans to deal with natural catastrophes — Katrina being a prominent recent teacher — but do we know how our governments would operate if we were attempting to do what we do every day at almost half capacity?

Governments are encouraged to have continuation of operations plans, but we are on new ground here, and existing plans need to be modified to accommodate the potential hazards of a pandemic. In February 2008, the CDC released a report on public health preparedness, included as Appendix J of this manual. There is much yet to be done.

A pandemic leaves many unanswered human resource questions relating to payroll, continuation of benefits, working remotely, and non-punitive attendance matters. It also leaves many unanswered questions about how state and local government departments will work together — possibly for the first time. This manual helps you with all of it.

*Continuity of Operations Planning: Preparing for an Avian Flu Pandemic* addresses how local governments can plan for their response to a pandemic and offers concrete ideas as to how you can keep your government operating effectively while protecting and caring for the public.

Organization will be a key factor in coping with this situation. We guide you in the development of your response team, which will be responsible for initiating and carrying out your plan and

procedures. Sample timetables, worksheets and benchmarks will help you complete your checklist of readiness items.

Risk assessment is a crucial first step, which helps you analyze the potential areas of need and assess the capacities necessary to maintain an adequate level of governing. We supply you with sample worksheets and checklists that should be used to create or modify current continuity plans and procedures.

Your formal response plan will identify essential operations and set the stage for continuation of operations. To help you write your formal plan, we have provided a model avian flu response plan that identifies trigger events to begin plan implementation and covers essential functions, personnel and other safety concerns, and critical crisis communications.

Legal issues involving federal and state employment laws may arise in the event of an avian flu pandemic. We highlight the significant federal laws that will likely come into play, discuss how they may apply during or after a pandemic, and provide information necessary to develop policies and procedures to guide your activities through a very challenging period.

Communication will be the key to the success of your avian flu response program. We devote several chapters to designing and implementing a crisis communications plan that will keep your employees and the community aware of your government's intentions and procedures. Chapter 11 is an in-depth discussion about communicating with the media during a pandemic.

Recovery will not just happen. Your preparations, your responses during the crisis, and your employees will all affect your government's ability to survive and thrive through what could be the worst pandemic of our times.

"Failing to plan is planning to fail" is a familiar adage. But the reality of getting caught unprepared in a pandemic can cause devastation for your community at large. You need to be prepared.