



# Bio-Defense Network

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: Why have other companies done this?**

**A:** Many companies understand the urgency in getting essential life saving medication to employees in the event of a disaster. This program helps ensure that employees are not waiting in long lines at schools for medication. This gives them direct access to the medication at your office location.

**Q: How does this protect my employees?**

**A:** In the event of a major terrorist attack involving a biological agent release, your company can get rapid access to life saving medication for your employees. This service is provided free of charge and only requires your willingness to dispense this critical medicine.

**Q: What is a “Closed POD?”**

**A:** “POD” is short for “Point of Dispensing,” a term used in public health to identify locations where medications may be quickly dispensed in the event of an emergency. An Open POD is a location where anyone may come to receive medications to protect against a specific attack. A Closed POD is a facility that is open only to a limited number of people, such as a company’s employees and their dependants. By establishing a series of Closed PODs throughout St. Louis County, the Department of Health is better able to focus its staff efforts on operating Open PODs for residents not otherwise covered.

**Q: What are the benefits of the Closed POD program to my business?**

**A:** The Closed POD program is the best way to protect your workforce in the time of a life-threatening emergency. Your employees and their families will not be required to stand in long lines at public distribution sites. They will know that in case of an attack, they merely need to come to work to protect themselves and their entire family. It is an excellent employee benefit for a business to provide its workforce at virtually no cost. For businesses, this offers an excellent business continuity advantage as well.

*The Bio-Defense Network is a joint project of the  
St. Louis County Department of Health and PandemicPrep.Org*



**Q: What is the cost of the Closed POD program to my business?**

**How can we ensure that it remains as budget neutral as possible?**

**A:** The Closed POD program is available at little to no cost to your organization. It will involve some staff time for training. Since the Closed POD training is designed to be integrated into your current emergency plans and trainings, it should not require much additional staff time. In addition, the St. Louis County Department of Health will work with each Closed POD host to obtain and hold for them the physical items needed to operate their POD. (This includes traffic cones for parking lots, clipboards etc.) Those items will be delivered to each Closed POD host along with medications for the POD staff. In the rare event of an activation, those organizations that don't have medical staff onsite will have to contract a medical professional to oversee the distribution of medicines and oversee this event. Visiting Nurse Association has agreed to provide professionals to groups and businesses to staff their Closed PODs. This fee would be negotiated between you and the medical provider you choose.

**Q: When would businesses be asked to dispense medications at our own facility?**

**A:** The only time the St. Louis County Department of Health would ask businesses or partner organizations to dispense medications to employees, their families and/or clients would be in the very rare event that there is a great risk to the whole population and preventive medications need to be taken very quickly. Events such as bioterrorist attacks in the region could cause the County to initiate the network of Closed Points of Dispensing.

**Q: Are the St. Louis County Department of Health staff going to run the Closed POD to dispense medications?**

**A:** No. Local Health Departments will be operating Open PODs throughout the community, and will not have the staff necessary to operate Closed PODs. In the event of an emergency, the St. Louis County Department of Health will make two deliveries to each Closed POD. The first will be set-up materials for the site **and** medications for the Closed POD volunteers and dependants. The second delivery will be medications for the total number of enrollees at each site. Closed POD hosts are encouraged to cover all employees, dependants and others who would be expected to be at the site, such as guests (at a hotel) or students (at a school.) Your organization is responsible for providing staff and updated plans to run your Closed POD.

**Q: Are we required to recruit medical staff to dispense medications to our employees?**

**A:** Yes. Missouri law requires that even in a time of emergency, each Closed POD must have **at least one** certified medical staff person onsite. For companies that do not have access to a medical professional, arrangements have been made with the Visiting Nurse Association and BJC Corporate Health Services to provide medical oversight. The cost of those medical professionals is to be covered by the Closed POD host. Employees of the POD host may obtain

training from the State of Missouri to serve as support to the certified medical professional by dispensing medication. However, each site must have at least one medical professional onsite.

**Q: Where will we refer employees if they have medical problems or medical questions about the medications we are handing out?**

**A:** The St. Louis County Department of Health will provide you with scripted questions and answers and procedures to follow (you will be educated on this process in more detail). Those who are not sure about whether they should take the medication will be given the life-saving medications to take home with them and told to consult with their own doctor.

**Q: Will people be allowed to pick up medications for their family?**

**A:** It depends on the procedures of the organization that has agreed to be a Closed POD host, but it is expected that employees will be encouraged to pick up medications for their entire family and take them home for their use.

**Q: Are the medications in unit dosages?**

**A:** Yes. You will be given the medications already packaged with clear instructions and precautions just like any other medication received at a local pharmacy.

**Q: Do you provide any kind of injectables?**

**A:** No. Only emergency medications available in the form of pills or tablets will be made available to Closed PODs. Using the forms and instructions provided by the St. Louis County Department of Health, your staff will be able to reasonably dispense the medications to other employees, their families and/or clients.

**Q: Are there multiple drugs in case I am allergic to one of the medications being dispensed?**

**A:** Yes. Depending on the situation (example: in the case of an aerosolized anthrax release) we will provide more than one type of antibiotic.

**Q: Could someone be turned down for medication during the dispensing process?**

**A:** That is very unlikely. Each Closed POD would receive guidance about the medications developed by the St. Louis County Department of Health, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and/or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dispensing staff would provide pre-prepared written information about the reason for the emergency medications, benefits and possible side effects of taking the medication to all employees. There may be some employees who have contraindications to both drugs offered, in which case they should be referred to their own doctor or a public/open POD for further consultation.

**Q: How will my employees who are dispensing be protected from medical liability?**

**A:** The Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act (PREP Act) provides immunity from liability claims arising from the administration and use of covered countermeasures to manufacturers, distributors, program planners and qualified persons involved in the administration and use of a covered countermeasure such as would be distributed at a Closed POD. As long as your employees follow the directions of the onsite medical professional, they are immune from liability.

**Q: What are the planning parameters for how large the release is and when the St. Louis County Department of Health will provide prophylaxis (preventative medications) to everyone?**

**A:** It will depend upon the situation at the time and the level of immediate risk to the population. Currently, local health department planning efforts are based on a worst-case scenario where it is necessary to dispense medications immediately to the entire population.

**Q: What happens if someone overdoses on the medication because “if one is good more must be better”?**

**A:** That is always a possibility when someone leaves a pharmacy or dispensing site with their medication. Patients will be given instructions on how much medication to take and when they should take them (this will be provided by the health department). It is up to the person to follow the directions.

**Q: How much time is required for training a company’s staff to operate a Closed POD?**

**A:** Half day training sessions are expected to be presented in St. Louis County in May of 2011 for new Closed POD host companies. A half day will cover the training necessary for staff and also will include an exercise. Additionally, those training sessions will be video-taped and made available in the future for companies wishing to train additional staff. Going forward, exercises will be held to assure Closed POD staff readiness is maintained.

**Q: We are only open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at our company. Are we expected to get medications to employees if something happens after hours even if many employees live out of town?**

**A:** The goal is to get the life-saving medications to the public as quickly as possible. Therefore, Closed POD hosts will be encouraged to open the PODs as soon as possible after an attack, even if that means opening them on the weekend or keeping them open into the evening.