

Government Official Toolkit: Recovery Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic



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INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves in the United States and around the globe, communities are joining forces to defeat this global health crisis for good. We know that elected officials across the country play important roles to ensure communities have access to consistent, evidence-based resources, services, best practices, and guidance. People throughout the community need to know they can trust that elected officials are working closely with organizations and experts across industries who each play a role in the long-term recovery process.

Healthcare Ready was founded in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina to focus on connecting patients to available healthcare during disasters. Since then, Healthcare Ready (healthcareready.org) has evolved to a nonprofit organization that works to build and enhance the resiliency of communities before, during, and after disasters. This toolkit provides best practices and resources for elected officials to share with constituents and other community leaders as our communities enter the recovery stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMUNITY & CONSTITUENT COLLABORATION

Each community across the United States has both shared and unique needs during this critical time of the COVID-19 recovery phase. Some needs, such as a reliable supply stream of personal protective equipment and vaccines, are universal and can be achieved through an understanding of the supply chain and establishing partnerships with companies and organizations that can help push supplies where they are needed most. Other needs may be dependent on the specific population make up of a community including the age of its residents, specific healthcare needs and access, cultures represented, and socioeconomic factors. Regardless of what a community looks like, residents must be engaged in a dialogue to best determine what is needed, and then it is up to those in leadership roles to ensure they are communicating what is available, how to access it and how residents should make their ongoing needs known to make sure this cycle continues without interruption.

Healthcare Ready utilizes a streamlined donation process to allow companies across the healthcare industry to work directly with our organization to provide in-kind and monetary support while continuing to prioritize requests for these critical needs.

Examples of requests that Healthcare Ready can support include:

- Guidance on preparedness plans to protect your community's health during disaster
- Facilitating the delivery of medical supplies to healthcare groups and community organizations
- Providing assistance to help patients navigate their healthcare needs such as information on refilling prescription medications during a crisis.

These requests and donations can be made by contacting alerts@healthcareready.org or calling 1-866-247-2694.



WHAT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES DOES HEALTHCARE READY PROVIDE THAT CAN BENEFIT MY CONSTITUENTS?

Map Your Meds: This map allows constituents to find information on changes to prescription medication rules and laws in your state due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Use this resource by visiting www.healthcareready.org/covid19-patient-resources/meds/.

Rx Open: Rx Open helps patients get access to medicine in an emergency by mapping the location of open and closed pharmacies in a disaster-stricken area on the free www.RxOpen.org and www.HealthcareReady.org websites. Government officials and first responders use Rx Open to coordinate response and recovery efforts. Relief agencies rely on Rx Open to ensure people in shelters have access to pharmacies. It also shows open American Red Cross shelters.

Rx On the Run: Are your constituents prepared if a disaster strikes? Many people stock up on water, bread and canned goods, but forget about their medicines. Your constituents can use Rx on the Run at www.HealthcareReady.org/rx-on-the-run to print a personalized wallet card that documents their prescriptions and other important medical information.

COVID-19 Resource Hub: As response efforts continue, Healthcare Ready continues to monitor and track resources for constituents. Resources and toolkits for individuals and patients include [state-level insurance emergency orders on prescription refills](#), [tips to protect yourself from COVID-19](#), and [telehealth coverage policies for COVID-19](#). The resources hub also includes relevant [pandemic business continuity resources](#) for the healthcare supply chain including best practices for disinfection and infection control and guidance for workforce protection, including preparedness resources and toolkits. Feel free to contact Healthcare Ready with any inquiries about additional resources or unmet needs in your communities.

Constituents may also call 2-1-1 – available across several localities in the US – to ask about local services that may help them pay for their medications.



PLANNING FOR INITIAL RECOVERY STAGES

Your constituents will look to you and other leaders in the community to provide guidance on best practices and ensuring safety as communities open and restrictions are lifted. As your staff begin to more frequently engage with your constituents, they can be a resource and provide them tips and guidance that will help ensure their safety. The following information could be shared across your social media channels and posted to your website.

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Cleaning and sanitation are always important for communal gathering spaces, but it goes without saying that a global health crisis presents a particular emphasis on them. Make sure to keep these good practices in place when planning a gathering for your organization:

- Clean and disinfect surfaces daily such as door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, grab bars and hand railings. For more information on good cleaning and disinfection practices, head to the [CDC's page on this](#).
- Clean and disinfect shared objects between each use such as microphones, office equipment and payment devices.
- Create a schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Limit the number of people who can use the restroom at once to maintain social distancing.
- Clean and disinfect restrooms multiple times a day, particularly high-touch surfaces like faucets, toilets, doorknobs and light switches.
- Keep restrooms constantly stocked with handwashing supplies.
- Keep gathering spaces ventilated by opening a window or door.
- Arrange gathering space seating options to maintain social distancing of at least six feet.
- Eating food at gatherings should be avoided. However, if food is distributed use pre-packaged containers/bags, and disposable dishes and utensils. Do not share food or utensils.

MAINTAINING HEALTHY OPERATIONS

Having a plan and sticking to it, while useful, is not enough to adequately maintain healthy operations.

Administrative Operations:

- Always stay up to date on local and state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to affirm it is safe to hold your organizational gathering as planned.
- Consider participating with local authorities and other community groups to engage in COVID-19 response efforts.
- Define decision-making protocols to stay adaptable to the quickly changing public health landscape, including a communication plan and information-sharing system.
- Designate one staff person responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns, and make sure all staff and attendees know who they are, how to contact them, and when to contact them (receiving a positive test for COVID-19, experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, contact with a COVID-19 infected person within the last 14 days).
- Implement flexible sick leave policy for staff. Prepare for flexible sick leave by coordinating a roster of back-up staff and volunteers.

- Conduct a virtual safety protocol training for staff and regular volunteers.
- Limit sharing of gathering spaces with other groups/organizations as much as possible.
- Promote healthy habits among staff and volunteers such as eating healthy, exercising, getting adequate sleep, and using time to unwind.

Gathering Operations:

- As mentioned earlier, do not forget to protect the privacy of and make accommodations for high-risk persons (such as virtual attendance).
- Reorganize gathering spaces to maintain social distancing of at least six feet and prioritize outdoor gathering spaces as often as possible.
- Group staff, volunteers and attendees into small groups that limit their contact with other groups.
- Stagger gathering arrival times to maintain social distancing.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to avoid public transportation when possible. If this is not possible, direct them to the [CDC's page on protecting yourself when using public transportation](#).
- Maintain a supply of masks for persons to wear if necessary and make sure masks cover both the mouth and nose.
- Perform daily health checks in the form of temperature screenings and/or symptom checks.
- Instruct staff and volunteers to wash their hands regularly for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Always have staff and volunteers clean their hands before, during, and after food preparation; before eating food; after using the restroom; after blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing; after coming in contact with a frequently touched surface; after putting on, removing, or touching a mask.
- Persons should avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

UNDERSTANDING FUTURE STAGES OF RESPONSE

As the outbreak of COVID-19 evolves in the United States and around the globe, both the private and public sectors are joining forces to find solutions and fill gaps in the system to address this global public health crisis. Health organizations across the supply chain are tirelessly working to develop ways to diagnose, prevent, and treat those affected by the novel coronavirus. As an elected official, we urge you to work closely with your local emergency management organizations and those capable of providing resources to those you serve. Being part of the conversation and planning includes reviewing state plans for disaster preparedness and response, reviewing state and local investment in public health, and ensuring the involvement of community leaders and organizations in disaster planning. As response and recovery of this pandemic continue to evolve, your support and involvement will help ensure your community benefits from a strong supply chain and that local needs continue to be met – every step of the way.

THE ROLE OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN

The healthcare supply chain is how medicines and other healthcare supplies are manufactured, distributed, and provided to patients. These complex, global systems are established with ample built-in protections to ensure that medical



supplies are manufactured and delivered to those who need them, no matter how severe the disaster. The most vital of these protections is a supply chain's ability to predict, plan, and react to potential disruptions in one or more links of the chain through a diverse pre-established global network.

Healthcare supply chains take a great deal of time and effort to construct, as over decades biopharmaceutical manufacturers painstakingly assemble substantial global chains to ensure that if one area or link of the chain is compromised, another can fill the gap. This is why Healthcare Ready takes great pride in our mission of supporting and strengthening healthcare supply chains to make this process of establishment and maintenance much more streamlined and effective.

DESIGNED TO BEND, BUT NEVER BREAK

An important aspect of successful healthcare supply chain design is the ability to prepare for likely pressures. For example, areas with a higher propensity for flooding or hurricane damage will have pre-established stockpiles, or increased production levels in certain times of the year for necessary medical resources to quickly disseminate should such a disaster occur.

However, many disasters, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, are nearly impossible to predict. To combat such instances, partners within the healthcare supply chain invest heavily in the design, maintenance, and modernization of facilities, their respective quality systems, and alternative distribution methods. Through diligent planning and wise investment, these efforts have been successful in avoiding any major disruptions in the global healthcare supply chain due to COVID-19.

Visit [Healthcare Ready](#) for more information on the supply chain, its role, and how you can help keep it strong.

DEVELOPING DISASTER-READY COMMUNITIES

As an elected official, your constituents look to you to ensure that it is ready to respond to future disasters and emergency situations. Resources like [Ready.gov](#) will help you plan the steps to consider in building a disaster-ready community:

- **STEP ONE: Identify Local Partners**
- **STEP TWO: Build a Team**
- **STEP THREE: Set Goals**
- **STEP FOUR: Serve Your Community**
- **STEP FIVE: Celebrate Success**

Lastly, ensure that existing and/or new policies introduced only help to further strengthen preparedness efforts and do not create unnecessary challenges. Disaster ready communities must remain nimble to appropriately respond to emergency situations and smart policies that allow for this flexibility are often the foundation.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH

Collaborating with local county health departments is an effective way of staying informed about what services and healthcare resources are available in your community. Sharing the resources they create with constituencies will help keep people informed during every stage of public health emergencies. Search for resources created by state health departments [here](#).

These relationships are also important when looking to share information about vaccine availability within a community. Helping constituents [find a vaccine](#) near them will keep them informed throughout the long-term recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and serve to further strengthen your community's emergency response efforts.

Constituents with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or who have [tested positive](#) for COVID-19 should follow the CDC's [criteria around home isolation](#). Individuals should also explore resources regarding [treatment and therapeutic options](#) and discuss with their healthcare providers. This may include the use of combination monoclonal antibodies or an antiviral like remdesivir depending on timing and severity. Combination monoclonal antibodies are administered via IV infusion shortly after a patient tests COVID-19 positive. If a person has recently tested positive, this option should be discussed with a healthcare provider as soon as possible.

CONTACT HEALTHCARE READY

Questions about our services and resources, including requests for information, assistance or additional resources can be sent to Healthcare Ready via:

- **Email:**
 - Response-related questions or assistance: Alerts@HealthcareReady.org
 - General outreach to Healthcare Ready: ContactUs@HealthcareReady.org
- **Hotline:** 1-866-247-2694
- Sign up for Healthcare Ready's weekly "Situation Reports" that provide routine overviews on the response and critical information that can help you protect your communities. Request to be added to the email list here: <http://www.healthcareready.org/contact-us>

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