

Community Corrections' Preparedness for Responding to Pandemic Flu and Other Crises

**A Report of
Responses to a Request for Information**



American Probation and Parole Association

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INTRODUCTION

Under a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), will provide guidance to community corrections agencies in formulating strategic plans and protocols for responding to pandemic flu and other crises. One of the first steps toward this goal is to collect information about existing plans and protocols. This preliminary report summarizes the responses to a request for information that was sent by APPA to agencies across the Country.

METHOD

A web-based request for information was disseminated in February of 2007 in an effort to collect information regarding community corrections agencies' existing policies and procedures for responding to pandemic flu and other crises. The request for information (Appendix A) was organized in five sections to collect information about: agency demographics; existing Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs), pandemic response planning and level of coordination with other stakeholders; personnel policies and staff safety measures; offender triage and supervision procedures; and existing COOPs for the courts, jails, and prisons with which the agency works.

The request for information (RFI) was placed on the American Probation and Parole Association's web site so that respondents could complete the form online or print the RFI and mail or fax their responses. A link to the RFI webpage was emailed to approximately 3,500 individuals including past and present members of APPA as well as other community corrections professionals who have participated in APPA Training

Institutes and other programs. The email message asked recipients to forward it as necessary to the person within their agency best able to respond to the RFI.

Because the initial email could have been forwarded to any number of people, and because there is no way to know how many individuals actually viewed the RFI, it is not possible to define a sampling frame to calculate a response rate. A total of 25 responses were received from agencies in 17 States, as listed in Appendix B.

FINDINGS

Respondent Demographics

The first section of the RFI asked for demographic information about the jurisdiction and geographic area served by the respondent's agency. As can be seen in Table 1, seven respondents described their jurisdictions as urban, seven as rural, four as suburban, and six as some combination of the three types. The geographic areas served were identified by respondents as county (56%), state (24%), and city (12%); one agency covers a combination city/state/county area and another serves a judicial district.

Table 1 – Jurisdiction and Geographic Area Served

	Number	Percent
Type of Jurisdiction		
Urban	7	28
Suburban	4	16
Rural	7	28
Other:	7	28
- Urban and Rural	2	
- Urban, Suburban, and Rural	4	
- Not specified	1	
Geographic Area		
City	3	12
State/Territory/Province	6	24
County	14	56
Other:	2	8
- Judicial District	1	
- City, State, and County	1	

Continuity of Operations Plans

A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) establishes policies and procedures that ensure the continuation of mission-essential functions when any emergency or catastrophic event threatens or incapacitates normal operations. The RFI queried respondents regarding their agency's COOP and also asked about the policies and procedures that have been developed by their agency specifically for responding to a pandemic outbreak.

Approximately half of the respondents (n=13) said that their agency has a COOP. These respondents provided additional information regarding whether certain specified components are included in their COOP. Table 2 lists those components and shows the number of respondents indicating their COOPs contain them.

Table 2 – Components Included in Continuity of Operations Plans

Component	Number	Percent
Delegations of authority/chain of command	12	92
Identification of functions that are essential to agency's mission	12	92
Emergency communications - voice and data (procedures; equipment)	11	85
Security and workplace safety	11	85
Identification of mission-critical personnel (positions)	10	78
Order of succession of personnel to key leadership positions	9	69
Identification of emergency team	9	69
Identification of alternate operating facilities	8	62
Identification of alternate offender reporting procedures	8	62
Reconstitution plan for returning to normal operations	7	54
Information technology redundancy	6	46
Procedures for accessing vital records and data systems	5	38
Personnel classroom training and practice exercises	5	38
Plans for post-pandemic review to measure effectiveness of response plans	4	31

Pandemic Preparedness Planning

Only seven of the 25 respondents indicated that their agency has developed policies and procedures that are specific to responding to a pandemic outbreak. Of the 17 agencies that do not have such policies and procedures, eight are in the process of developing them, six have not yet begun to develop them and three have no plans for

doing so; three other respondents were unable to report the current status of their agency's development effort.

Fifteen agencies indicated they are coordinating their pandemic planning effort with other stakeholders, identified in Table 3. Only one of these agencies is coordinating solely with public health. The others are working with multiple stakeholders in a variety of combinations, but none is working with more than six stakeholders. It is perhaps worth noting that three agencies are working only with public health and emergency response, and only five of the six agencies who are collaborating with jails/prisons are also working with law enforcement.

Table 3 – Pandemic Preparedness Coordination

Stakeholder	Number	Percent
Public health	14	93
Emergency response	10	67
Jails/prisons	6	40
Law enforcement	6	40
Fire department	4	27
Local courts	3	20
State courts	2	13
Communications sector	2	13
Business sector	1	7
Federal courts	0	0
Other	3	20
No response	9	60

Respondents were asked whether their agency's budget includes funds to cover the costs involved in preparing for a pandemic event. Only one of the 21 people who answered this question indicated that the costs are covered in their budget; 19 (90%) said the costs are not covered, and one did not know.

Personnel Policies and Procedures

Respondents were queried about specific personnel policies and procedures relative to staff safety and absenteeism during a pandemic outbreak. As Table 4 reveals, more than half of all respondents said their agency has not formally addressed these particular issues.

Table 4 – Personnel Policies and Procedures

	Yes		No		No Response	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Do personnel policies specifically address absence from duty during a pandemic outbreak?	7	28	14	56	4	16
Is there a family assistance plan, enabling essential personnel to report for duty during a pandemic?	2	8	18	72	5	20
Has personal protective gear been purchased for staff to use during a pandemic?	8	32	13	52	4	16
Is there a plan for housing staff that are unable to leave the workplace due to pandemic-related circumstances?	5	20	14	56	6	24

Absence from duty

Explanations were provided by some of the seven respondents who indicated that they have personnel policies to cover absenteeism during a pandemic. One said that “those who are not ill will continue the work.” Another said that there will be a flexible leave policy during a declared pandemic, but did not elaborate. One respondent provided a list of the policies and procedures to be followed during a pandemic, which included the following:

- Flexible leave policies – absences will be permitted for:
 - Personal illness
 - Family member illness
 - Bereavement
 - Disruptions in other service sectors (e.g., school/day care closures, reduced public transportation)
- Flexible work hours, with director’s approval
- There will be no work from home.

Family assistance

The two respondents whose agency's plans include providing assistance to family members so that essential personnel are able to report for duty provided the following details:

- Families will be able to come into the institutions as needed.
- The Department of Corrections will receive mass supplies from Strategic National Stockpile resources for staff and their families. (A legislative initiative will be sent to authorize this plan.)

Personal protective gear

Eight respondents indicated that personal protective gear has been purchased for staff to use during a pandemic. Only one of these agencies has designated such gear for use solely by essential personnel.

Staff housing

Most respondents (56%) reported that their agency does not have plans for housing staff that are unable to leave the workplace during a pandemic. Those respondents employed in agencies that do have such plans explained that staff would be housed in prisons, residential facilities, or dormitories.

Stockpiled supplies and equipment

Supplies and equipment need to be stockpiled (i.e., reserved) for use during a pandemic outbreak to ensure continuation of agency operations and to meet the needs of essential personnel who will be on duty during such an event. Table 5 lists some of those items and shows the number of respondents who indicated that their agency has stockpiled necessary equipment and supplies to last at least 30 days. The majority of

respondents (64%) did not answer this question. This could indicate that these items are not being stockpiled by most respondents' agencies, or it might mean that many respondents do

Table 5 – Stockpiled Supplies and Equipment

Item	Number	Percent
Food	2	8
Water	3	12
Medical equipment	3	12
Medicine/medical supplies	2	8
Fuel	2	8
Alternate electricity sources (e.g., generators)	7	28
Other	1	4
No response	16	64

not have knowledge of the supplies and equipment that their agency may be stockpiling for use during an event such as a pandemic outbreak.

Offender Supervision

It is anticipated that fewer staff will be available (or willing) to report for duty during a pandemic outbreak, and that jails and prisons may be locked down, evacuated, or unable to admit additional inmates. This section of the RFI was designed to elicit information about the contingency plans that have been developed by agencies to ensure that adequate offender supervision services are maintained in the face of staff reductions and fewer incarceration/detention options.

Deciding what services are non-essential is crucial to effectively coping with the staff shortages that are expected to occur during a pandemic. Ten respondents reported that their agencies have identified non-essential services that could be curtailed or eliminated; ten others said they have not done so (see Table 6). Only two respondents indicated that contingency plans have been developed for incarcerating violators in the event that jails/prisons become unable to admit additional inmates.

Table 6 – Offender Supervision

Plan/Procedure	Yes		No		Don't Know		No Response	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Non-essential services have been identified for curtailment or elimination during a pandemic.	10	40	10	40	0	0	5	20
A contingency plan has been developed for incarcerating violators if jails/prisons are locked down during a pandemic.	2	8	18	72	1	4	4	16
Offender supervision triage procedures to be implemented during a pandemic have been established.	4	16	17	68	0	0	4	16

Four respondents said that offender supervision triage procedures have been developed by their agency. Of these respondents, two indicated that the triage process would identify the minimum level of supervision required for each offender; another respondent said triage would identify the type of supervision needed (e.g., intensive supervision); and one respondent indicated that both the minimum level and type of supervision would be determined through triage.

Other Continuity of Operations Plans

Community corrections agencies work in concert with the court, jail, and prison systems within their jurisdictions. Therefore, it stands to reason that COOPs and other emergency response plans adopted by each of these interacting systems should be compatible with one another. Respondents were asked to indicate whether the courts and jails/prisons with which they work have COOPs and, if so, whether their agency has a copy of those plans. As Table 7 reveals, most respondents do not know whether or not COOPs are in place for either the courts or the jails/prisons in their jurisdictions. Only one respondent reported that both the courts and the jails/prisons with which they work have COOPs in place and that their agency has a copy of both of those COOPs. Four

additional respondents indicated that COOPs have been developed for their jails/prisons, but only one of those four said that their agency has a copy.

Table 7 – Court and Jail/Prison COOPs

	Yes		No		Don't Know		No Response	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Court COOP is in place	1	4	7	28	12	48	5	20
Agency has copy of court COOP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jail/prison COOP is in place	5	20	5	20	10	40	5	20
Agency has copy of jail/prison COOP	2	-	1	-	0	-	2	-

DISCUSSION

No generalizations can be made from the body of data that has been collected through this RFI; there were simply too few responses representing too few jurisdictions. However, this very lack may be illuminating in its own way. Consider that APPA's request for information was disseminated across the Country to at least 3,500 email addresses and possibly many more if, as was requested, recipients forwarded the RFI to more cognizant staff persons for response. Any number of circumstances could account for the fact that only 25 responses were received. For example, some recipients may have read through the RFI and decided they did not have enough knowledge to adequately respond. It may be that very little information is available at this point in time. Perhaps there are many agencies that are only just beginning to develop strategies for how they will cope with the ramifications of a pandemic. It is also possible that in many agencies the development process has not yet begun or, more alarming, is not even on the horizon. In any event, it would appear that there is a definite need to educate and raise awareness in the field about the potentially devastating impact a pandemic outbreak could have on operational capabilities. It must be understood that in order to ensure adequate levels of operation during a pandemic, it is crucial for agencies to have their

response strategies and protocols in place, tested, and well rehearsed before an outbreak occurs.



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Community Corrections' Preparedness for Pandemic Influenza

Under a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) is collaborating with the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) to develop guidance for community corrections agencies as they formulate strategic plans and protocols for responding to pandemic flu and other crises.

We are requesting information regarding your agency's current policies and procedures for responding to pandemic flu and other crises. **If someone other than yourself should respond to this Request for Information on behalf of your agency, please forward it to the appropriate person.** We need to receive your agency's response by **February 16, 2007**.

Thank you for your assistance! If you are providing copies of your agency's plans, policies, procedures, or other materials to APPA, please mail or email them to me at:

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**Please provide your contact information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Territory/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION I - DEMOGRAPHICS**

1. Which of the following best describes the jurisdiction in which you work?

Urban     Suburban     Rural     Other - specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the following best describes the geographic area served by your agency?

City     State/Territory/Province     County     Other - specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION II - GENERAL**

3. Has your agency developed a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)?\*

Yes     No

**\*Note:** A Continuity of Operations Plan establishes policies and procedures that ensure the continuation of mission-essential functions when any emergency or catastrophic event threatens or incapacitates normal operations (for example, terrorist attacks, weather-related catastrophes, pandemics). Question 3b relates to your agency's COOP; questions that are specific to pandemic response plans begin with Question 4.

**3a. If your agency has developed a COOP, please mail or email a copy to APPA.**

3b. If your agency has a COOP, please indicate which of the following components are included (check all that apply).

- Identification of functions that are essential to the agency's mission
- Identification of mission-critical personnel (positions)
- Identification of emergency team
- Order of succession of personnel to key leadership positions
- Delegations of authority/chain of command
- Emergency communications - voice and data (procedures; equipment)
- Security and workplace safety
- Identification of alternate operating facilities
- Identification of alternate offender reporting procedures
- Information technology redundancy
- Procedures for accessing vital records and data systems
- Reconstitution plan for returning to normal operations
- Personnel classroom training and practice exercises
- Plans for post-pandemic review of COOP operations, policies and procedures to measure effectiveness and identify necessary remedial actions
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Has your agency developed policies and procedures specific to responding to a pandemic outbreak?

Yes       No       Don't know

4a. If no, please indicate the current status of your agency's effort to develop such policies and procedures:

- Partially developed
- Not yet started
- No plans to develop\*
- Don't know

\*If your agency is NOT planning to develop a pandemic response plan, the following questions do not apply. PLEASE STOP HERE.

**4b. If your agency has developed or partially developed policies and procedures, please mail or email a copy to APPA.**

5. Does your agency's budget include funds to cover the costs of preparing for a pandemic outbreak?

Yes       No       Don't know

6. Is your agency coordinating its pandemic preparedness planning with other stakeholders?

Yes       No       Don't know

6a. If yes, please identify who is involved (check all that apply):

- Emergency response
- Public health
- Jails/prisons
- Law enforcement
- Local courts
- State courts
- Federal courts
- Fire department
- Business sector
- Communications sector
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION III - STAFF**

7. Has your agency purchased personal protective gear for staff to use during a pandemic outbreak (e.g., face masks, gloves)?

Yes       No       Don't know

7a. If yes, please indicate for whose use the gear is intended (please check one):

- All personnel  
 Essential personnel only  
 Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Don't know

8. Please indicate which of the following has been stockpiled by your agency in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of essential personnel and sustain operations for at least 30 days (check all that apply):

- Food  
 Water  
 Medical equipment  
 Medicine/medical supplies  
 Fuel  
 Alternate electricity sources (e.g., generators)  
 Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Does your agency have a plan for housing staff who may be unable to leave the workplace (e.g., quarantine/isolation order; transportation services disruption)?

Yes       No       Don't know

9a. If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Has your agency developed personnel policies specifically addressing absence from duty during a pandemic outbreak?

Yes       No       Don't know

10a. If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Does your agency have a plan to provide assistance to family members to ensure that essential personnel are able to report for duty?

Yes       No       Don't know

11a. If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION IV - SUPERVISION SERVICES**

12. Has your agency identified non-essential services to be curtailed or eliminated during a pandemic outbreak?

Yes       No       Don't know

13. Has your agency established offender triage procedures to be implemented during a pandemic event?

Yes       No       Don't know

13a. If yes, please indicate what the triage process will identify (check all that apply):

- Minimum level of supervision required for each offender
- Type of supervision needed by each offender
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Does your agency have a contingency plan for handling violators if a pandemic outbreak causes jails and prisons to lock down and refuse to admit additional inmates?

Yes       No       Don't know

14a. If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION V - OTHER**

15. Is there a Continuity of Operations Plan for the court(s) with which your agency works?

Yes       No       Don't know

15a. If yes, does your agency have a copy of such COOP(s)?

Yes       No       Don't know

16. Is there a Continuity of Operations Plan for the jails/prisons in your jurisdiction?

Yes       No       Don't know

16a. If yes, does your agency have a copy of such COOP(s)?

Yes       No       Don't know



**SECTION VI - CLARIFICATIONS AND COMMENTS**

Please use the space below to provide clarification and/or comments to us. Simply list the question number and your statement of clarification, or just write your comments. (Please attach additional sheets as necessary.)

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If you are interested in assisting APPA with this project by participating in a focus group/working group, please indicate the level at which you would participate (check all that apply):

- As the agency's director
- As the agency's pandemic contact person
- As a Subject Matter Expert
- Other – please specify: _____

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information. Please return by February 16, 2007 to:

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**American Probation and Parole Association
Request for Information:
Community Corrections' Preparedness for Pandemic Influenza
February 2007**

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