Community and School Preparedness Partnerships

Laura Sahr
Emergency Planning Liaison
New York State Education Department
518-474-3906
lsahr@mail.nysed.gov

Mission
The Human Services Committee is a cooperative venture of Federal, State, public, private, and voluntary agencies active in disaster preparedness with the purpose of addressing human needs of disaster victims.

General Population Temporary Sheltering
State Education Department
State Emergency Management Office
American Red Cross

June 7, 2006

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Administrators of Charter Schools

FROM: Richard P. Mills

SUBJECT: Emergency Shelter in Schools

School personnel play a key role during emergencies. Whether faced with a natural, technological, or human-made event, your working together with local and county emergency responders makes a difference. Please review emergency plans and any agreements covering the use of school facilities and vehicles during a disaster with your county and local emergency response agencies.
• The Red Cross maintains shelter agreements with various building owners for use as temporary general population shelters.

• The majority of these facilities are schools.

**New York State Law:**

Chapters 358 of the Laws of 2001 and 505 of the Laws of 2002

Public employees trained as Red Cross disaster volunteers become eligible to receive up to 20 work days per calendar year of Disaster Leave without any loss of seniority, pay, annual leave, sick leave, or earned overtime.

Disaster Leave is **not** an entitlement and is subject to an agency's approval.
Pandemic Influenza Planning Partnership

A USNY Approach: Key Points
Consistent messaging
Clear lines of communication
Decision making

- Sample letters & press releases
- Posters and checklists
- Personal preparedness tips
- Suggested activities for children


From August 2006 letter to schools from Commissioner Mills and Commissioner Novella

Many schools may close because of excessive student and staff absenteeism. Available evidence indicates that school closure (perhaps as long as 12 weeks in duration) early in a pandemic may significantly reduce influenza transmission.

Health officials will notify school authorities when conditions warrant school closure. In certain instances, school facilities may be asked to function as Points of Dispensing (PODs) for essential medications.
Strategies to enhance relationships and partnerships

Engage: community leaders and school administrators; faculty and staff; parents and students; community and school transportation providers; public health experts and school nurses; mental health experts and school counselors; State and local emergency responders – the key players

Evaluate: what are the potential hazards in and around the community and school facilities
- a hazard analysis
Educate:
- Does everyone understand their roles and responsibilities in the plan - train, train, train
- Incident Command System (ICS)

Exercise: test the plan - will this plan work when you need it most - are there gaps in the plan

Enhance: review and revise the plan - what have you learned from the exercise - a good plan is never finished
Some lessons to think about...

- Administrators and community leaders may not be present during an emergency.

- The normal communication system may not be operable during an emergency.

- Does everyone understand their roles & responsibilities in an emergency?

Some lessons to think about...

- Does the plan include provisions for substitute teachers and staff?

- Facilities with shelter agreements may be damaged during the event.

- Are non-ambulatory individuals addressed in the emergency plan?

Some lessons to think about...

- Are transportation, maintenance, and public works staff included in emergency planning activities?

- Are there mutual aid agreements in place?

- Are post-incident, mental health, and recovery issues addressed in the emergency plan?