

Pandemic Plan for the Church

Ministering to the Community in a Time of Crisis

Ministering to Vulnerable People

Pre-identifying Vulnerable People

As the Body of Christ we are uniquely called to address the needs of this population. However, in order to address these needs in the event of a pandemic or disaster emergency, it is wise to pre-identify those who are vulnerable and to prepare.

People considered vulnerable and in hard-to-reach populations may never receive important health messages. This may be due to any number of reasons, including they are not connected to mainstream communications or they do not speak English. Others may be unable to afford healthcare or to access the services they need to stay healthy. This section is written to help prepare you to care for all members of your congregation, and that none are overlooked. Although vulnerable and hard to reach populations may vary from community to community, the following are population segments noted to be especially at risk in a public health emergency. In addition to this list, please keep in mind the care givers of the vulnerable individuals, as they too may need special consideration when preparing for disasters.

- Physically disabled – due to a physical impairment, the person requires full time attended care for feeding, toileting, personal care, etc.
- Blind – range includes low vision, night blindness.
- Deaf, Deaf-Blind, hard of hearing – latent deaf, situational loss of hearing, limited range of hearing.
- Mentally disabled – serious and persistent illness; includes being a danger to themselves or others.
- Developmentally disabled – unable to safely survive independently, attend to personal care.
- Medically dependent, medically compromised – dependent of medications to sustain life or control conditions for quality of life, i.e. diabetic, weakened immune system, those who cannot be in/use public accommodations.
- Chemically dependent – includes substance abusers, others who would experience withdrawal, sickness or other symptoms due to lack of access – i.e. methadone users.
- Seniors – frail elderly, people who have age-related limitations/needs, includes those in nursing homes or assisted living care or living alone.
- Children – anyone below age of majority separated from parents

- Limited English or Non-English proficient – includes persons with limited ability to speak, read, write or fully understand English.
- Immigrant Communities – persons who may have difficulty accessing information or services because of cultural differences.
- Homeless and Shelter Dependent – includes persons in shelters, on the streets or temporarily housed; transitional, safe houses for women and minors.
- Emerging or Transient Special Needs – needs/conditions due to emergency, temporary conditions, i.e., loss of glasses, broken leg, tourists/visitors needing care.
- Impoverished – person with extremely low income, without resources or political voice, limited access to services, limited ability to address own needs.

Special Challenges of Vulnerable and Hard to Reach Population

- Barriers to communication – Unable to hear, read, or see announcements or bulletins. Do not have access to normal forms of communication.
- Specialized medical care – Medical conditions requiring specialized care.
- Require assistance for daily activities - Need for consumable medical supplies (formula, bandages, medications, etc.), medical equipment (wheelchairs, oxygen, etc.), and/or caregivers.
- Supervision needs - Adults suffering from dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, or others suffering from another mental debilitations.
- Transportation barriers – Unable to drive, or no access to private or public transportation. Or they require a vehicle with special access.
- Economically challenged – Poverty stricken, or lack of resources to prepare on their own.

Ways to Meet the Challenges for Those in Your Congregation

Your church can provide programs and services critical to helping vulnerable and hard to reach individuals and families. Listed here are just a few suggestions.

- Identify which members of your community might need extra assistance.
- Translate documents and health materials into languages spoken by members of your community.
- Ensure that messages are simple and clear for low-literacy audiences.
- Develop a “necessities bank” to provide needed items to individuals who cannot afford them.
- Provide transportation for community members who can’t drive or who rely on public transportation systems.

- Organize services for members needing assistance picking up medication, equipment, or supplies.

Designating Leaders for Communication and Follow-up Care

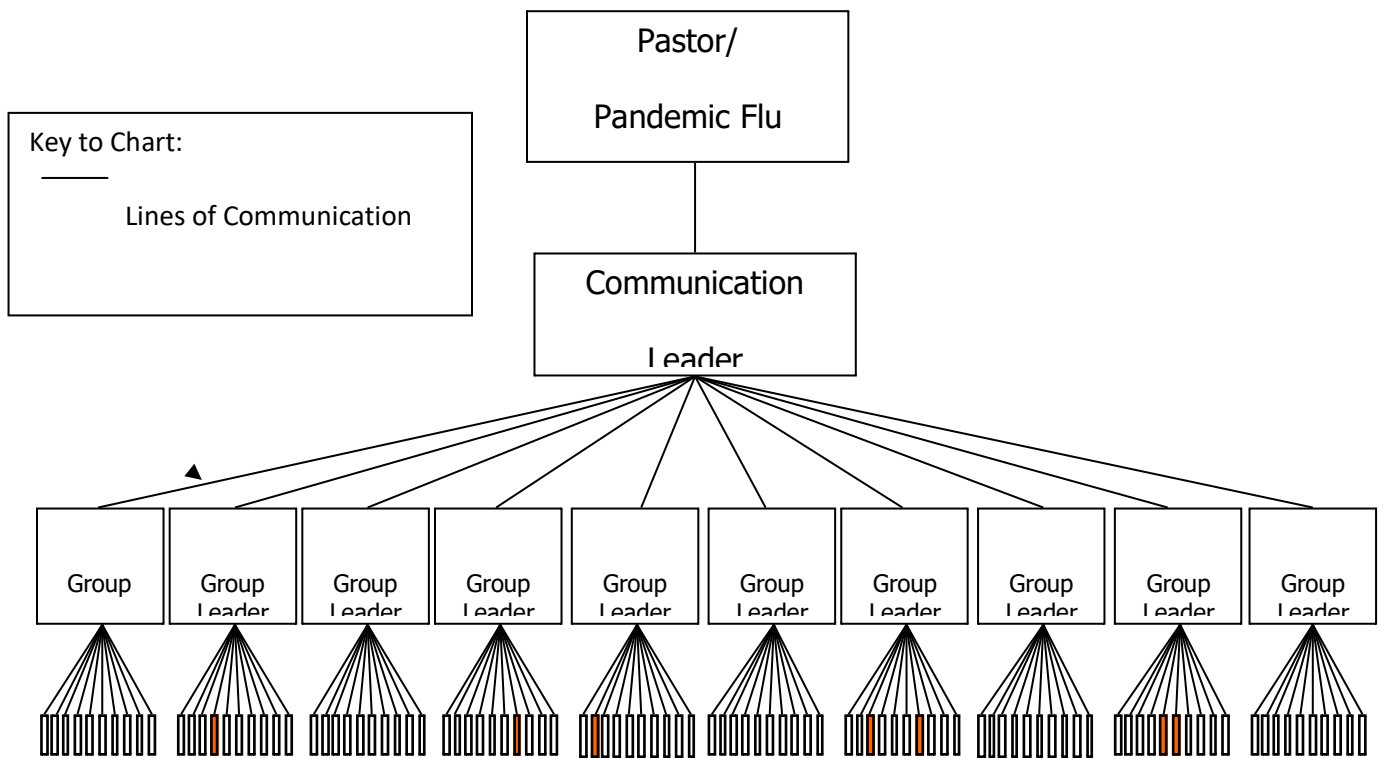
To ensure correct information is reaching all members as well as any essential follow-up care can be an overwhelming task dependent on the size of your church.

This is good example for a large or mega church to follow as the divisions are by thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. This also takes the pressure off of the pastor who cannot possibly meet all the demands a congregation has, and as Jethro so aptly put it Moses, you will “wear out.”

First take the total number of members in your church and divide it up as stated by Jethro, by thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Choosing to make these divisions by geographical region may prove advantageous later when leaders may have to deliver messages or personally check on those members for which they are responsible. Then choose key staff and members of your congregation to designate as leaders. Again, consider their place of residence as reference to the group.

At this time it will be the responsibility of the designated leaders to pre-identify those who are vulnerable to ensure these members are cared for.

Choose a key staff member or church member to collaborate the communication leaders for dissemination of information, as well as follow up care for those who are in need.



You may consider assigning a key staff or church member to head up this task. Develop a data bank of information such as daily medications, or other medical needs. Also make note of those who are vulnerable due to physical, mental, economic, language, transportation and social barriers. This information is personal and many may not want to share their information due to privacy concerns. Encourage those who do not wish to share to prepare in advance on their own. A sample questionnaire is included at the end of this section.

Any information acquired from such members should be shared with only those in need of knowing to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Those group leaders who are responsible for disseminating information, or home Bible study group leaders. This information is to be used only in need of emergency and to enable those in need to be ministered to in the Body of Christ.

If you have home fellowship groups already in place, instruct the leaders to follow through with identification. This method of dividing the congregation can be used in starting a cell group ministry in your church. Of course, not all will want to attend a group determined by geography and many want to attend one across town. Do not discourage any type of involvement. For more information on the advantages of setting up a cell church model, please see the section titled Treatise for a Cell Church Model in End Days.

Pre-Identifying Vulnerable People in Your Community

Reaching out at a time of a disaster is a great opportunity to extend the hand of Jesus. Encourage members of your congregation to look about their neighborhood and make note in advance of those who would need care. Not everyone attends a church, and dependent on the disaster, getting to another section in a community may be prohibited. Perhaps there are those who can store extra cans of food or bottles of water with a neighbor in mind. This will present the golden opportunity of sharing your hope while you share your supplies.

Ministering to Vulnerable People

Once this population has been identified, preparing to care for them in a disaster is the next step. Dependent on the needs of each individual will determine the type of preparation. Leaders should have filled out forms with pertinent information regarding the needs of those under their care. It is at this time determining what necessary steps to take to reach out to this population will take place. Perhaps this would be a good time to initiate a food or necessity bank. Please see the section titled Church and Community Mitigation Plans for more information.

Caring for the Sick

Before engaging in any activity involving visiting or caring for the sick, please see the sections Caring for the Sick, and Infection Control.

Name of Your Church

Identification of Vulnerable and Hard to Reach People

Name of household _____

Street address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Cell Phone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Names of each family member and dates of birth and any disability

Emergency Contact and phone number: _____

Please list any medications and dosages that are critical to daily sustenance: (Use back of sheet for additional space)

Please list any challenges that your family may face in the event of pandemic or disaster emergency i.e., transportation, language, food, etc. These challenges are for those who are unable to prepare in advance and not meant for those who are physically, mentally, and situationally able to prepare in advance.

This information is meant for the purposes of pre-identifying a vulnerable and hard to reach member of the congregation. It will be used in the event of pandemic or disaster emergency to ensure all members of the congregation have access to information, transportation, or medical care. This information will be kept private and confidential and will only be used if the need arises. Sharing of personal information is purely voluntary, and if you do not wish to share this information, it is the sincere hope of the Pastor and all those who minister at this church that you will make provisions in advance for whatever needs may arise in the event of an emergency.