

Branch Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Emergency Preparedness Drill Summary

Drill Date: June 23, 2004

On June 23rd, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency held a mass clinic drill to test the medical capacity of the agency in the event of a bio-terrorist event in Branch County. The drill was held at the Branch County Fairgrounds Dearth Center in Coldwater. Volunteers from around the Branch County area, as well as State and Regional Emergency Preparedness staff, assisted with the drill. Additionally, 75 community volunteers assisted by playing “victims” of the mock disaster.



The drill officially began on June 22, 2004 at 9:20am, when the Health Agency sent out a HAN alert (mock) that there were patients being treated in the local ER with suspicious symptoms. A second alert (mock) was sent out at 12:50pm, confirming that we had an anthrax exposure and were going to request the Strategic National Stockpile to Coldwater to treat mass casualties. That is where the actual on-site drill begins.

The mass clinic ran from 9:00am- to 11:00am on June 23, 2004. Volunteer victims were cycled through the clinic as quickly as possible with specific procedures being utilized as to weight, patient health concerns, medical history and other medications currently being taken. EMS was also on-site to assist with transporting victims who were showing symptoms to the Community Health Center of Branch County Emergency Room. The Community Health Agency was also fortunate enough to have 2 members of the local media who attended the mass clinic, allowing the Health Agency to show the public what we are doing on their behalf. On-site media coverage and related newspaper coverage was excellent.

There were some identified problems as the clinic session proceeded; some were corrected as we went. Other problems identified will have to be addressed in ongoing readiness meetings that the Health Agency holds on a regular basis. Pictures were taken at the site prior to the event and during the event. These pictures document setup, site capacity and patient flow to determine that the Dearth Center meets the parameters set by the CDC for a mass clinic site. This mass clinic and its evaluation are part of the obligation of the Community Health Agency and its on-going preparation for responding to a public health emergency.

There was an on-site evaluation session held immediately following the mass clinic to seek input from staff who worked in the clinic, State Strategic National Stockpile Coordinators, local law enforcement personnel, County Emergency Management staff and community volunteer victims. Immediate feedback following a drill is essential in determining positive and negative lessons learned. All comments and suggestions from the evaluation phase will be used in planning for future drills or in the event of an actual emergency. The overall evaluation by those present was excellent. The lessons learned and the training experience in providing a mass clinic by the Community Health Agency staff was invaluable.