

## **Announcement of Upcoming Exercise for Certified Home Health Agencies/Long Term Home Health Care Programs**

Over the next several weeks, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) will be conducting a major, statewide exercise named Outbreak Unchecked (OUREx) simulating the spread of an influenza pandemic across the State in which Certified Home Health Agencies (CHHAs) and Long Term Home Health Care Programs (LTHHCPs) will participate. Although agencies will not know the exact date of the exercise, this announcement provides all information the agencies need to know in order to respond to this exercise.

The benefit to your agency of being involved in this exercise is that it will qualify as your agency's participation in a community level, full scale exercise, helping you to meet the exercise requirements of the new CMS Final Rule for Emergency Preparedness for certified home health agencies, for which the implementation date is November 15, 2017.

Additionally, the exercise provides an excellent opportunity for certified home health agencies both to work with their NYS Regional Healthcare Coalition on local emergency preparedness planning/response and to practice their own agency level response protocols that are so critical during an emergency event.

The exercise scenario involves a mock overcrowding of those hospitals playing in the exercise due to the pandemic and a subsequent need for them to decompress their census. As part of this exercise, CHHAs should expect the following involvement:

- **Survey Response:** Using their Health Commerce System (HCS) Communications Directory contact information, the NYSDOH will alert CHHAs and LTHHCPs, to respond to a survey in the HCS HERDS application. The survey contains a subset of questions that typically are included on the standard Homecare Emergency Agency and Capacity survey forms, and that are focused on identifying each agency's available surge capacity.

A rapid turnaround time of no more than 2 hours for response to these surveys will be required to enable availability of your responses within the condensed timeframe of the exercise. Since only a small subset of the questions normally asked on the forms is needed for the exercise, it will take much less time to respond to the survey than it typically has taken for other events and drills.

- **Hospital to Homecare Agency Emergency Communications:** Using data from the homecare survey responses, hospitals participating in the exercise will identify which CHHAs, LTHHCPs have the capacity to accept mock patients they wish to discharge to homecare. The hospitals will select, and then contact a small number of agencies to simulate a request to each agency to accept a patient they plan to discharge. Hospitals will use the point of contact information provided in the survey to make this call.

Those agencies contacted with this request should respond to the hospital based on their actual, current capacity to accept the patient. The agency simply needs to indicate whether or not they can accept that patient for care. Following that response, the agency will have no further tasks in the exercise.

Please note that hospitals will refer to all mock patients with fictitious names or anonymously, e.g., Exercise Patient One, Two, etc., and no real patient identities will be used in this exercise. All communications to agencies during this exercise will begin with the following phrase, "This is an Exercise, this is an Exercise, this is only an Exercise," so there will be no doubt on the part of the agency that it is not an actual situation.

Thank you for your participation! If you have any questions regarding this exercise, please contact us at: [hcemergency@health.ny.gov](mailto:hcemergency@health.ny.gov).