

# Table-Top Exercise

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- 12 regional CMS QIN-QIOs nationally

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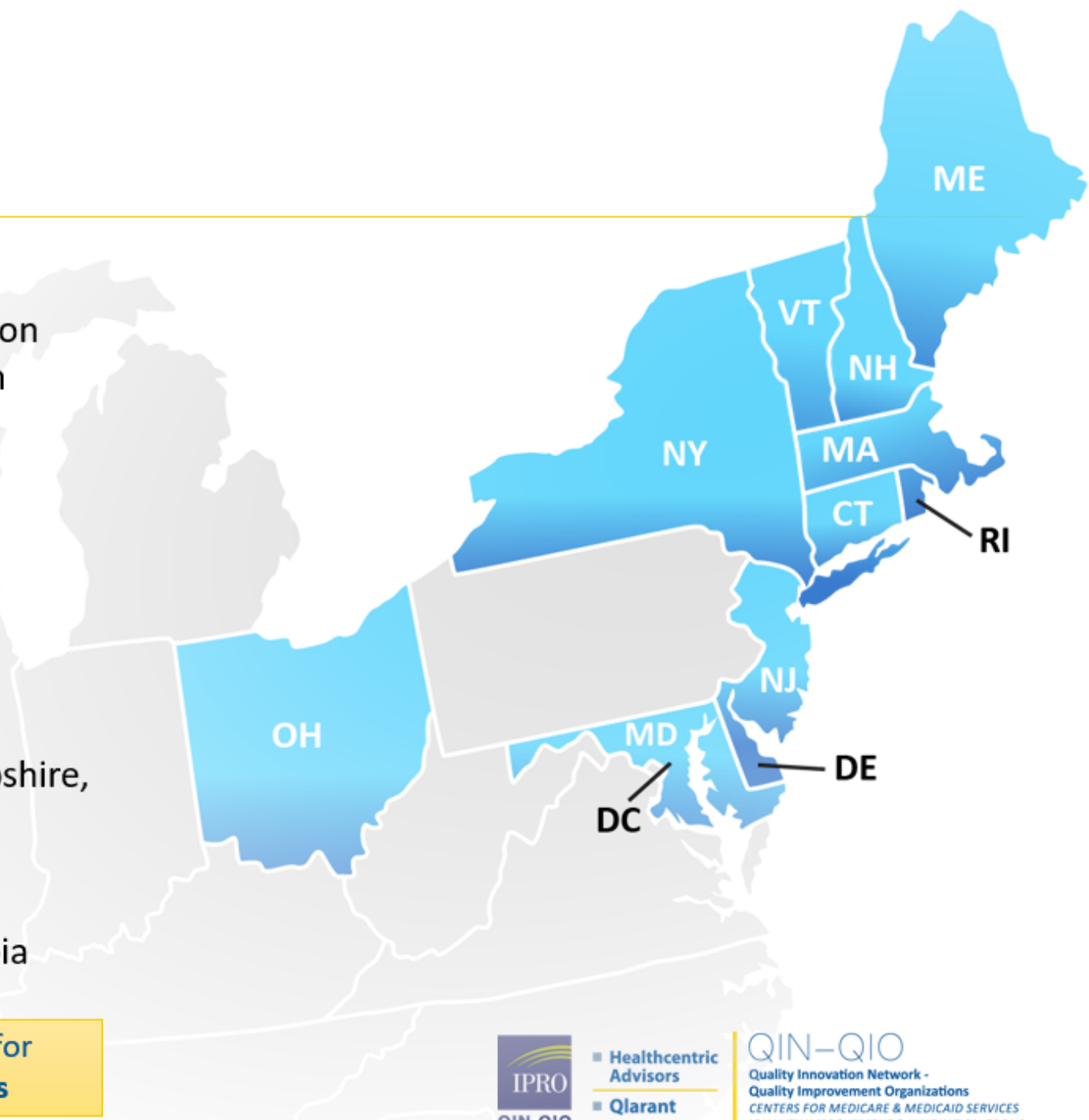
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# What is a Tabletop Exercise?

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- A tabletop exercise is a guided discussion of a plan in a relaxed, non-stressful setting.
- It's similar to a problem-solving or brainstorming session where participants collaborate to identify solutions and share insights based on their organization's current plans and the goals of the exercise.
- The effectiveness of a tabletop exercise is measured by the feedback from participants and how this feedback influences the revision and improvement of policies, plans, and procedures.



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# What a Tabletop Exercise is Not

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- A tabletop exercise is not the process for creating a plan, nor is it a venue for training and discussing a plan. Often, a workshop precedes a tabletop exercise to provide necessary training and discussion.
- This brief is designed for organizations that already have a plan in place and are ready to evaluate it.

# Why Conduct a Tabletop Exercise?

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- Tabletop exercises enhance organizational capability, allowing organizations to assess their business continuity plans and pinpoint strengths and areas needing improvement.
- These exercises also provide staff with training and awareness, offering them the chance to practice their roles and responsibilities during an incident.
- Additionally, tabletop exercises are cost-effective and low-risk.

# CMS Requirement

The CMS requirement for long-term care facilities (LTCs) mandates that emergency preparedness exercises occur at least annually, with two main types of exercises each year (**E-Tag E-0039**):

- **Full-Scale or Functional Exercises:** LTCs must conduct at least one full-scale exercise each year, simulating real emergency conditions to test their emergency plans. These can be conducted in collaboration with local or state emergency management agencies or independently if external resources are not available.
- **Tabletop Exercises or Additional Drills:** LTCs must also conduct an additional exercise annually, which can be a tabletop exercise or another type of drill. Tabletop exercises allow staff to discuss hypothetical scenarios and their responses in a low-stress setting, focusing on coordination, communication, and identification of any gaps in the plan.

# Duration of a Tabletop Exercise

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- Typically, a tabletop exercise lasts between one to four hours, though this can vary depending on the incident being simulated.
- Discussions are open-ended, allowing participants to reach detailed conclusions without feeling rushed.
- When the allotted time is up, the exercise concludes.
- Finding a perfect time for everyone to participate may be challenging, but it's important to schedule the exercise during a period that minimizes distractions.

# Roles in a Tabletop Exercise

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- Players
- Observers
- Facilitator
- Recorder
- Organizational Leadership
- Planning Team



# Roles in a Tabletop Exercise

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- **Players:** Active participants who discuss and perform their usual roles during the exercise. They respond to the simulated emergency based on the objectives of the exercise. This can include many individuals and organizations, such as landlords and vendors, who can learn from or contribute to the discussion.
- **Observers:** Although not directly involved, observers support the development of player responses by asking relevant questions or providing expertise.
- **Facilitator:** Facilitators lead the exercise, providing situational updates and moderating discussions. They ensure that participants are engaged and guide them towards informed decisions.

# Roles in a Tabletop Exercise

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- **Recorder:** These individuals document the discussions, noting how well they align with existing plans, policies, and procedures. They also record follow-up items and next steps.
- **Organizational Leadership:** Leadership's support is crucial, even if they do not actively participate. Their buy-in is key to the success of the exercise.
- **Organizers:** Responsible for overseeing the exercise from start to finish, ensuring smooth execution by coordinating logistics and other necessary elements. They are familiar with the preparation and execution processes but do not participate in the exercise.
- **Planning Team:** This team helps define the exercise's parameters, advises on what should be tested, and determines appropriate questions and scenarios. They are typically subject matter experts familiar with the organization's plan and capabilities.

# Planning a Tabletop Exercise

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## Securing Buy-In:

- To ensure success, it's important to gain support from your organization's leadership. Position tabletop exercises as vital contributors to the organization's resilience. To gain buy-in,
- Tie the exercise's objectives to the organization's strategic goals and consider whether it fulfills any auditor requirements.
- For participants, it's crucial to communicate the value of their involvement, ensuring they are fully engaged during the exercise.

# Setting the Scope and Objectives

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- **Needs Assessment:** Identify why the exercise is necessary by reviewing emergency plans and determining the most vulnerable areas or those needing evaluation.
- **Scope:** Consider time and resource limitations and prioritize which functions and operations to evaluate.
- **Purpose Statement:** Craft a broad statement of the exercise's goal, which will guide the selection of objectives and scenarios.
- **Objectives:** Develop specific, performance-based objectives that are clear, measurable, achievable, realistic, and task-oriented.

# Choosing a Scenario

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- FEMA and State Emergency Management Agencies offer various scenarios to support organizational planning. Choose a scenario that aligns with your objectives. It's advisable not to test all aspects of your plan in one exercise; instead, focus on evaluating different components over multiple exercises.
- <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/what-would-you-do-scenarios>

# Examples of Scenarios

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- **Evacuation Scenario:**
  - **Objective:** Test the facility's evacuation plan.
    - **Scenario:** A fire breaks out in a section of the facility, requiring a full evacuation.
- **Natural Disasters:**
  - **Objective:** Assess readiness for natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, or wildfires.
    - **Scenario:** A hurricane is approaching, and the facility must implement its emergency plan.
- **Active Shooter:**
  - **Objective:** Prepare staff for an active shooter situation.
    - **Scenario:** An active shooter is reported on the premises, and the facility must go into lockdown.

# Customizing the Scenario Slides

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- The provided scenarios are general and can be tailored to your organization's specifics, such as location, date, and personnel.
- While customizing, focus on evaluating your organization's response rather than debating the city's actions, which are included for context.

# Basic Steps

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1. **Establish Goals and Objectives:**
2. **Select Participants:**
3. **Design the Exercise:**
4. **Prepare Materials:**
5. **Conduct the Exercise:**
6. **Debrief and Evaluate:**
7. **Develop an After-Action Report:**
8. **Implement Improvements:**



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# Example of Tabletop Exercise Interjections for a Tornado

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- **Pre-Storm Incident Management/Communications**
  1. **Scenario:** Severe weather has been predicted for much of your area. All counties within your area are under a tornado warning.
    - **Interjection:** “What preparations will the facility make in response to the tornado warning? How will on-duty staff members be notified?”
  2. **Scenario:** Tornadoes have been spotted throughout the region.
    - **Interjection:** “If the facility sustains damage, how will off-duty staff members be notified? What local community partners would be notified?”

# Example of Tabletop Exercise Interjections for Tornado

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- **Incident and Response Phase**

1. **Scenario:** A tornado has caused significant damage to the facility.

- **Interjection:** “What immediate actions will be taken to ensure the safety of residents and staff? How will you manage the influx of emergency responders and media?”

2. **Scenario:** The facility’s main entrance and part of Wing 2 have sustained significant damage.

- **Interjection:** “What decisions need to be made regarding evacuation or shelter-in-place? Who is responsible for making these decisions?”

# Example of Tabletop Exercise Interjections for a Tornado

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- **Post-Event Recovery**

1. **Scenario:** The storm has subsided, and damage assessments are underway.

- **Interjection:** “How will the facility ascertain information from the community to gauge the potential impact of residents? What plans are in place to augment staff during a surge?”

2. **Scenario:** Multiple injuries and fatalities have been reported.

- **Interjection:** “What protocols are in place for managing mass casualties? How will you communicate with families and volunteers arriving to help?”

# Tips for Success

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- Limit the number of participants to ensure meaningful discussion
- Book an appropriate room with necessary technology
- Provide food to keep participants comfortable and engaged
- Prepare nameplates to help participants identify each other



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# Engaging Participants and Facilitators

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- **Getting the Right People Involved:** Invite individuals who have decision-making power or relevant expertise. Limit the number of participants to maintain effective discussion, using breakout sessions if necessary.
- **Choosing a Facilitator:** Select someone with strong communication and interpersonal skills. The facilitator's role is to manage discussions and encourage contributions, not to demonstrate their knowledge. Consider using an external facilitator to encourage detailed responses from participants.

# Facilitating the Exercise

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## Facilitator's Responsibilities:

- Introducing the narrative
- Encouraging problem-solving
- Controlling the pace and stimulating discussion
- Draw solutions from the group rather than providing them

# Why Do We Do After Action Review (AAR)

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- Required (FEMA/CDC)
- Quality improvement tool
- Reflect on what happened
- Provide closure
- Reap the benefits
- Explore specific components of response (e.g., equity, innovation)

# Benefits of an AAR

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- **Learning and Improvement:** AARs help teams understand what worked and what didn't, allowing them to make necessary adjustments and improve future performance.
- **Enhanced Communication:** These reviews promote open and honest communication among team members, fostering a culture of transparency and collaboration.
- **Accountability:** By documenting successes and areas for improvement, AARs hold team members accountable for their actions and decisions.
- [https://emilms.fema.gov/is\\_0870a/groups/126.html](https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0870a/groups/126.html)



# Benefits of an AAR

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- **Informed Decision-Making:** The insights gained from AARs can inform better decision-making and strategy development for future projects.
- **Team Building:** Conducting AARs can strengthen team cohesion as members work together to analyze outcomes and develop solutions.
- **Crisis Preparedness:** In crisis situations, AARs can highlight areas where emergency response plans need improvement, ensuring better preparedness for future incidents.

# How Do You “Do” an AAR

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- Soon after response/exercise ends
- In person or virtual
- Facilitator, notetaker
- Questions

# Planner/Facilitator Responsibilities and Preparation

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- Determine scope of an AAR
- Review the purpose or objectives
- Define your questions
- Identify unique questions for the focus area topic (e.g, vaccine questions, partner engagement questions)

# What to Consider when Developing Questions

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- Coordination
  - Examine coordination within (internal)
  - Examine coordination across/with partners (external)
- Resources
  - Human resource capacity (availability of qualified and trained people)
  - Relevance of plans and procedures
- Technical aspects
  - Tangible: equipment, supplies, materials, facilities, physical environment
  - Intangible: lack of plans, support structures

# Facilitator Responsibilities and Preparation

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- Know your audience
- Review the questions you will ask
- Facilitate the discussion process; encourage participation, manage time, clarify issues
- Be impartial
- Summarize key discussion points
- Assist, when asked, with report (clarification of points, etc.)

# Facilitator – Conducting the AAR

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- Start and end on time
- Display AAR PPT
  - If have a Planner, they can display and advance slides
- Follow the agenda
- Introduction, rules, group charter/purpose
- Use Facilitator Agenda to guide discussion

# Modified Root Cause Analysis

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- Explore causes and contributing factors
  - Success or failure
- Identify root causes to prevent future problems
- Problem identified that clearly requires deep examination or to identify cause and better understand it
- Avoid “quick fixes”

# Framework for Modified Root Cause Analysis

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- Framework
  - Five Whys
  - Examine relevant factors related to elements that are:
    - Tangible
    - People
    - Economic/external
    - Organizational, managerial



# Deeper Dives

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- May hear about topics of:
  - Considerable interest
  - Controversy
  - Needing additional time, discussion, processing
- Due to time limits, suggest a follow-up/focused hotwash

# Running Out of Time?

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- Okay to miss some questions
  - May have covered them in earlier discussion
- Other ways to capture information
  - Follow-up survey
  - Deeper dives
- A must! Make sure to cover wrap-up (about 2 minutes): follow-up survey and mental health resources

# Facilitation Best Practices

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- Stay neutral
- Invite people to “raise their hand”
- Watch the time and move things along
- Stay focused
- Use active listening



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# After the AAR

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- Develop an Action Plan: Based on the discussion, create a clear and actionable plan for addressing the identified weaknesses and reinforcing the strengths.
- Follow Up: Ensure that the action plan is implemented and that the lessons learned are applied to future projects or events.
- Document the AAR: Record the findings and the action plan. This documentation should be accessible for future reference and for tracking progress on the implementation of improvements.
- [https://training.fema.gov/is/flupan/references/02\\_course%20forms%20and%20templates/02\\_hot%20wash%20form-508.pdf](https://training.fema.gov/is/flupan/references/02_course%20forms%20and%20templates/02_hot%20wash%20form-508.pdf)

# References

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- [https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/health\\_care\\_providers/](#)

# Thank You!

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# Learning Objectives

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