

## **OPERATION OF SCPHNS IN AN EMERGENCY OR DISASTER**

### **I. PURPOSE**

To prepare the agency for safe and effective operation, should Saratoga County experience a large-scale emergency or disaster.

### **II. OBJECTIVE**

To protect the agency's patients and staff, while maintaining the highest quality care possible during an emergency or disaster.

### **III. SPECIFIC EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

- A. Always remain calm.
- B. Assess the situation: including number and condition of victims, level of danger present.
- C. Call 9-1-1 if immediate assistance is needed.
- D. Remain in contact with the SPHN for direction, get additional assistance, and receive information about the status of the situation.
- E. Never place yourself at risk for injury; you cannot help others if you are injured and assistance may be deviated from the victims to you.
- F. In the absence of the Director and Assistance Director of Patient Services, management of the situation will be delegated to the on-call SPHN.
- G. In order for all department staff to maintain competency in their respective roles, should it become necessary to implement the Disaster Plan, a minimum of two (2) disaster drills will be held each year. These may be internal or external drills and may vary in size, numbers of staff and other people involved or type of drill initiated.

### **IV. TYPES OF EMERGENCIES WHICH MAY BE ENCOUNTERED**

#### **A. Fire**

- 1. If there is a fire in the agency's office, the Fire Plan will be initiated. (See agency procedure manual page F-1 Fire/Emergency Evacuation Plan). Emergency evacuation drills, including fire, will be held four times a year.
- 2. If the fire is in a patient's home, move the patient and any others present, to a safe area and then call 9-1-1. Notify SPHN.
- 3. Stay with the patient until the fire department staff declares it safe to return to the home or alternative housing is secured and the patient is settled.

#### **B. Interruptions in CHHA Services**

- 1. Weather or other natural emergencies such as snow and ice storms, floods, forest fires, impassable roads:
  - a. Each supervisor, in conjunction with the primary care nurses, will prioritize patients by the care needed and the availability of informal caregivers, such as family members.

- b. Patients will be contacted by phone to assess their current situations and inform them of any changes that will be made in their care caused by the emergency.

2. Work Stoppages

- a. The Director will notify the County Administrator and the New York State Department of Health that a labor action is threatened as soon as it becomes known and will begin to work with them to establish plans to protect the safety and welfare of the patients during the stoppage.
- b. The office will remain open during normal working hours (9 am – 5 pm) Monday – Friday, staffed by managers, employees of other county departments, volunteers and those staff members who chose to work rather than participate in the stoppage.
- c. All workers will be assigned duties based on priorities established by the Director of Patient Services or her designee.
- d. All management will be expected to report to their usual assignment. A temporary location/office may be designated for those employees who choose not to participate in the action.
- e. Administrative and supervisory staff will assess patient needs. Family and other informal supports will be enlisted to provide care when possible; patients requiring more intensive care than the agency can safely provide will be transferred to higher levels of care and management and those staff members who choose to work, will provide care to all other patients. The Director will work with the county Personnel Department to obtain temporary employees for the duration of the work stoppage.
- f. No new patients will be admitted for home care services. All referral sources will be contacted by the ADPS so that patients can be referred to other agencies, until the SCPHNS can accept new admissions.
- g. Should current patients develop critical needs, arrangements will be made for them to be seen by their physicians, go to hospital emergency rooms and if necessary, the staff person on site will call 9-1-1 for assistance.

3. Civil disruptions, state or national disasters, including radiological, biological or chemical accidents or terrorist attacks:

- a. All employees will follow instructions provided via the agency Communication Tree.
- b. The Director will implement the SCPHNS Emergency Plan and will coordinate activities with the Incident Command Center (ICC).
- c. High priority patients will be contacted by phone, if possible, and a nurse or supervisor will assess their current status, plan for their care and arrange for their transfer to another provider or level of care if necessary.

- d. If SCPHNS is unable to contact any patients, assistance will be requested through the ICC.
  - e. Refer to agency Bioterrorism Preparedness Plan.
4. An agency clinic is out of service for any reason:
- a. In the event an emergency of any type makes a clinic site unusable, the nurse in charge will immediately notify all staff on site; staff will assist those attending the clinic to evacuate the building, using designated exit routes. The nurse in charge will ensure that all clinic records are safely secured.
  - b. The nurse in charge will notify her SPHN who will in turn notify the Director of Patient Services (DPS) of the situation and the DPS will immediately notify the County Administrator and Safety Officer who will identify and make an alternative site available to the agency.
5. Patient or agency records are lost or made unavailable as a result of any event:
- a. The Senior Account Clerk will generate a Disaster Plan Report with patient emergency contacts (in HCMS go to *Reports*, then *Patients* and then *Disaster Plan*) and use available records or information supplied the supervisors to provide staff with all available information about patients care needs and financial data.
  - b. Regulators and payers will be notified by phone and then in writing of the problem and plans for reconstruction of the records.
  - c. The DPS will notify the Personnel Department and County Treasurer's Office for reconstruction of the Human Resources database, staff time cards and Payroll record.

## V. DISASTER DRILLS

### A. Internal Drills

1. Internal Drills, including fire, bomb threats or related types of possible threats to the integrity of the agency will be held at least four (4) times a year.

### B. External Drills

1. External drills, including, biological, chemical or nuclear attack, industrial and transportation accidents or large-scale natural disasters will be held no less frequently than two times a year. These may take any form, e.g., table top, realistic creations using volunteer victims, etc., and may be held jointly with other agencies. Different types of emergencies will be practiced each year.

- C. In case of an emergency, a plan will be in place to transfer patients to another agency.