The Operational Framework for Mutual Aid Requests (OFMAR): Health Care Professionals

2014 Cross Border Public Health Preparedness Workshop

Portland, Oregon
May 13, 2014
Background

• In 2009, Canadian Ministers of Health signed the Federal, Provincial and Territorial (F/P/T) Memorandum of Understanding On The Provision Of Mutual Aid In Relation To Health Resources During An Emergency Affecting the Health Of The Public (MOU on Mutual Aid)

• F/P/T health emergency management partners collaborated on the development of the Operational Framework for Mutual Aid Requests for Health Care Professionals (OFMAR) to put into practice the key principles outlined in the MOU on Mutual Aid
Key Principles of the MOU on Mutual Assistance

- Recognition that F/P/T governments have varying degrees of public health capacity and that collaboration is beneficial when a jurisdiction is overwhelmed by an emergency or public health crisis

- Sharing existing capacity is more efficient and effective than duplicating systems/approaches

- Jurisdictions can establish procedures required to provide assistance during health emergencies

- The provision of assistance will not endanger or severely limit public health or health system capacities in any jurisdiction providing assistance
Objective and Scope of the OFMAR

**Objective**

To provide a consistent and timely pan-Canadian approach to inter-jurisdictional health care professional (HCP) mutual aid during health emergencies or crises, through the use of standard procedures and protocols.

**Scope**

Non-binding guidance document. Currently addresses inter-jurisdictional mutual aid requests for registered nurses and physicians in Canada. Expansion to include broader professional groups, international requests and/or health asset mutual assistance requests being considered.
## The OFMAR Request Cycle

### Figure 1: F/P/T Mutual Aid Operational Framework

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<td>Mobilize HCP Step 2.1</td>
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<td>Select &amp; Accept Offer Step 1.4A</td>
<td>Modify Request for Mutual Aid Step 2.4</td>
<td>Monitor HCP Step 3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinate Logistics Step 1.5</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td>Administrative Procedures Step 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluations, After Action Reviews/ Reports and Improvements Step 3.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brief HCP Before Mobilization Step 1.6</td>
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**Step 1.4A - Verify Licensure is to be implemented for HCPs requiring a licence to practice**

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**Situational awareness and communication**
Pre-Mobilization Phase

Steps of pre-mobilization phase:

• Early Warning
  o Use of pre-identified single windows to alert the nation to a possible request for assistance
  o Maintenance of situational awareness

• Request for Mutual Aid
  o Formal announcement for the need for mutual assistance disseminated nationally
  o Templates provided to guide/aid in the request process

• Offer of Mutual Aid
  o Jurisdictions identify potential resources for deployment and provide offer once approved by relevant governance
  o Templates provided to help guide the offer process
Steps of pre-mobilization phase continued:

- **Selection and Acceptance of Mutual Aid**
  - Receiving jurisdiction reviews offers and selects based on a variety of criterion
  - Dialogue of terms and conditions ensue between sending and receiving jurisdiction

- **Licensure and Credentialing Verification**
  - In Alberta floods this was not an issue as unregulated professionals, however, for regulated professionals, this step would be necessary
  - P/T may opt to work through/with regulatory bodies and/or declare provincial decrees

- **Coordination of Logistics**
  - Sending and receiving jurisdictions work together to plan for sending and arrival of mutual assistance personnel

- **Health Care Practitioner Briefing**
  - The sending jurisdiction ensures that a pre-mobilization briefing is provided
Mobilization Phase

Steps of the mobilization phase:

- **Actual Movement of Health Care Professionals (HCP)**
  - Implementation of logistical planning

- **Integration of HCPs Locally**
  - Liaison and/or Receiving jurisdictional contact receives and provides orientation to HCPs

- **Monitoring and Ongoing Support**
  - Ongoing situational awareness and support of the mission and the HCP in the field

- **Modification of Request – Renew, Request or Release**
  - Additional mutual assistance, release of current resources are managed in this step
  - OFMAR provides a template to assist with this process
Demobilization Phase

Steps of the demobilization phase:

• Demobilize HCPs
  o Return assigned HCPs to their home jurisdiction(s)

• Receive returning HCPs
  o Ensure that returning HCPs arrive safely

• Provide Debriefing Opportunity
  o Voluntary opportunity to voice personal experiences and provide opportunity with jurisdictional follow up of HCP well-being as reintegrating into home jurisdiction
Demobilization Phase

Steps of the demobilization phase continued:

• Monitor HCP
  o Follow up process articulated that enables the identification of issues resulting from the assignment (e.g. PTSD, health issues, etc.)

• Administrative Procedures
  o Submit claims, process inter-jurisdictional financial/administrative processes as per the mutual aid agreement signed at the beginning of this process

• Evaluations/Lessons Learned
  o P/T and collaborative F/P/T lessons learned processes utilized to review and improve OFMAR processes, templates and tools
Validation of the OFMAR

• A series of exercises were conducted in 2013 to test and validate the operational processes and templates within the OFMAR.

• The activation of OFMAR processes during 2013 Alberta Floods positively demonstrated its application in a real situation.

• On December 18, 2013 the OFMAR was formally endorsed by all jurisdictional members of the pan-Canadian Public Health Network Council.
Alberta Floods 2013
OFMAR activated

• In June 2013, the OFMAR was implemented to initiate a pan-Canadian mutual aid request for Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) through pre-identified ‘Single Windows’, as per the OFMAR protocols.

• Public Health Agency of Canada collated pan-Canadian responses of offers and provided to Alberta for mutual aid acceptance consideration and decision

• Selection and acceptance of offer enabled and bilateral agreements, such as that between Alberta and BC resulted in the provision of EHO mutual assistance
Help Arrives!!!!

Cindy Watson  EHO – from the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)
http://www.vch.ca/about_us/news/love-thy-neighbour
Conclusion

• The approved OFMAR is now a tool at the disposal of F/P/T jurisdictions for inter-jurisdictional mutual aid during health emergencies

• Quality Assurance of the OFMAR will be enabled through:
  • Ongoing engagement with Provincial/Territorial Health Emergency Management Directors on further modifications; and
  • F/P/T opportunities are sought for OFMAR improvements through exercises.

• Currently under consideration is the potential to expand the OFMAR to include:
  • International requests for health care professionals;
  • Expansion to other health care professional groups (e.g. Mental health practitioners, Emergency Medical Services/Paramedical; Respiratory Technicians
  • Potentially for the request of other health assets
Operational Framework for Mutual Aid Requests: Health Care Professionals

Developed by:
The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Inter-jurisdiction Health Surge Capacity Task Group under the auspices of the Public Health Infrastructure Steering Committee reporting to the Public Health Network Council.

First Edition: December 2013

QUESTIONS?