

Introduction

The purpose of this guidance document is to assist public health officials and health care providers in preparing for and responding rapidly and decisively to the recurrence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in the local community or a health care facility. The document closely follows the draft SARS Public Health Guidance first issued on October 10, 2003, with subsequent revisions, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/sarsprepplan.htm>). The intent is to provide detailed State implementation strategies, consistent with the national guidance. New York State specific procedures, reporting forms, and legal guidance are provided.

As stated in the Executive Summary of the draft CDC Guidance document:

“The basic strategy that controlled SARS outbreaks worldwide was rapid and decisive surveillance and containment. The keys to successful implementation of such a strategy are up-to-date information on local, national, and global SARS activity; rapid and effective institution of control measures; and the resources, organizational and decision-making structure, and trained staff vital to rapid and decisive implementation. This guidance document accounts for two important features of SARS outbreaks: 1) they are neither regional nor national but rather confined to limited geographic – and even institutional – settings, and 2) they are dynamic, meaning that the characteristics of an outbreak can change quickly.”

The New York State guidance document was developed in consultation with local health departments and health care providers in New York State. In the event of a SARS outbreak, it is likely that specific guidance and procedures may change. Therefore, this document is likely to be revised. The document and any revisions will be available on the public website of the New York State Department of Health at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/index.html>.