

School Employees as Disaster Service Workers Tools Preparedness

The School Employees as Disaster Service Workers Tools will help you complete section 2.9 of the Pandemic Influenza Plan Template.

These tools provide information on the California Disaster Service Worker Program and on how to prepare school employees for their role as disaster service workers.

During a pandemic, if needed, *non-essential* public employees will be released from their normal duties so that they can be reassigned as disaster service workers to emergency field operations needing additional staff.

Schools in other states will need to check their state's emergency legislation to determine if public employees, and thus public school employees, have a mandated responsibility to assist during a declared emergency.

- *If school employees in your state do have a similar mandated responsibility, the information below will have to be modified to reflect local legislation.*
- *If they do not have a similar mandated responsibility, the disaster service worker portion of Plan Template Section 2.9 can be deleted from your school's Pandemic Influenza Plan.*

These tools include:

- Overview of California Disaster Service Worker Program.
- Example of How to Prepare District Employees for Their Disaster Service Worker Role.
- Tools To Assist Schools in Preparing Employees for their Role as Disaster Service Workers:
 - Orange County, California Brochure: *California Public Employee Disaster Service Workers: Did You Know?*
 - PowerPoint presentation: Responsibilities of Public Employees as Disaster Service Workers.
 - Communication: District Disaster Service Worker Emergency Plan.

Overview of California Disaster Service Worker Program

The State of California has a Disaster Service Worker (DSW) Program that includes all public employees and can include any unregistered person (e.g., spontaneous volunteers) impressed into service by a person having authority to command the aid of citizens in the execution of his or her duties during a state of war, a state of emergency, or a local emergency.

As public employees, school employees are DSWs. Examples of emergencies for which school personnel may be called upon to help as DSWs include fire, flood, earthquake, or public health emergencies requiring, for example, contingency hospitals when hospitals are overwhelmed, programs to feed vulnerable populations, or clinics to provide mass prophylaxis of the area's entire population. In an emergency, *non-essential* public employees—those that are not required for continuity of operations—are released from their usual duties so that they can be reassigned to assist any agency or organization carrying out its emergency response duties. Employees acting as DSWs will be assigned duties within their scope of training, skill, and ability. Examples of DSW responsibilities include:

- Registering people at a shelter or mass prophylaxis clinic.
- Translating for non-English speaking individuals.
- Acting as a messenger at a designated site.
- Serving food to emergency staff or to vulnerable populations.
- Answering phones.

California Government Code Specific to Disaster Service Workers

The following is presented to provide the legal basis for school district employees' roles as disaster service workers and the requirements to ensure employees are eligible to be paid while serving as disaster service workers.

The term "disaster service worker" includes all public employees and all volunteers in any disaster council or emergency organization accredited by the California Emergency Council. The term "public employees" includes all persons employed by the state or any county, city, city and county, state agency or public district, excluding aliens legally employed. (CA Government Code §3101).

By law, all disaster service workers shall, before they enter upon the duties of their employment, take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation set forth in the California Constitution that declares them to be disaster service workers in time of need (CA Government Code §3102).

To ensure that school employees can be paid and reimbursed for expenses when they serve as disaster service workers, "It shall be the duty of the person certifying to public payrolls to ascertain and certify that such disaster service worker has taken such oath or affirmation. Whenever there is more than one officer certifying to public payrolls the governing body of a city or county or school district may designate and make it the duty of a certain officer or officers to ascertain and certify that such disaster service worker has taken such oath or affirmation. The governing body of a city or county or school district may designate and make it the duty of a local disaster service officer to ascertain and certify that each volunteer disaster service worker has taken such oath or affirmation." (CA Government Code §3107)

Public employees acting as disaster service workers can get paid and reimbursed for expenses only if they have taken and subscribed to the oath or affirmation prior to serving as a disaster service worker (CA Labor Code §3107).

Example of How to Prepare District Employees for Their Disaster Service Worker Role

Check your state's emergency legislation to determine if public employees, and thus public school employees, have a mandated responsibility to assist during a declared emergency.

If public school employees have a mandated responsibility to assist during a declared emergency, determine how your district can prepare its employees. For example, a California school district can prepare its employees in the following ways:

- √ Maintain records verifying that school district employees have taken or subscribed to the oath or affirmation set forth in the California Constitution that declares them to be disaster service workers in time of need.
- √ Meet with your local jurisdiction's Emergency Management. Discuss the role of school district employees as DSWs and your responsibilities as their employer. Find out how district employees will know when they are being called on as DSWs to assist with emergency response.
- √ Educate school employees on their role as disaster service workers.
- √ Encourage school employees to prepare for a possible emergency by having a personal/family emergency plan for their families, home, pets, and other responsibilities in the event they should be called to assume disaster service worker duties.

Tools:

Disaster Service Worker Brochure

PowerPoint presentation: Responsibilities of Public Employees as Disaster Service Workers

Communication: District Disaster Service Worker Emergency Plan

- √ Develop district disaster service worker procedures such as the following example:

In the event of a disaster, employees are to:

- Secure their homes and families.

- Report to school to their normal jobs at their regularly scheduled time unless instructed to do otherwise by their supervisors.
- Follow supervisor's DSW reporting instructions.

DSW activities will be assigned to employees by their supervisors (e.g., told where to report) or by legal authorities to assist the county in carrying out its responsibilities in emergencies.

Tools To Assist Schools in Preparing Employees for their Role as Disaster Service Workers

- Orange County, California Brochure: *California Public Employee Disaster Service Workers: Did You Know?*
- PowerPoint presentation: Responsibilities of Public Employees as Disaster Service Workers
- Communication: District Disaster Service Worker Emergency Plan