

# Pandemic Emergency Management – Challenge & Tested Solution

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## Challenge:

Recruiting new staff and addressing staffing crisis during the pandemic.

## Solution:

Interagency staff pool

- Beginning Dec 20, 2021, Toronto-based DS service providers formed a collaboration, in partnership with the MCCSS, with the Toronto Sector Pandemic Planning Initiative (SPPI) and the Toronto Developmental Services Alliance to best navigate the Omicron surge. Participants meet daily to update on circumstances and solution issues.
- One deliverable which emerged was the *formation of a centralized on-call staffing pool* in concert with Toronto staffing agencies recommended by participating DS service providers.
- The model involves:
  - Staffing agencies hold third-party staff resources in an exclusive arrangement for deployment to participating DS agencies as needed.
  - These resources are dedicated to Toronto service providers and cannot work elsewhere.
  - Staffing agencies are paid a retainer for these resources if not deployed.
  - Staffing agencies are otherwise paid for actual utilization.
- Through collaboration with local DS stakeholders, a centralized staffing pool for the Toronto region was created using a dozen service providers and over a dozen staffing agencies. There are now 85+ staff available in the staffing pool.

## Steps to Implement:

1. Bring idea forth to local planning table
2. Form committee to address staffing shortage in the region
  - Ensure HR representatives from local stakeholders are involved
3. Identify staffing agencies and DS agencies willing to participate
4. Begin drafting legal agreements, or adapt the attached agreements from the Toronto region
5. Identify lead agency to coordinate the administration (i.e. for the Toronto area, it is CL Toronto)

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Date: January 13, 2022

Person(s) Consulted: Marg Stanowski, ED, Springboard Services &  
Malcolm Bernstein, Chief Human Resources Officer, CL Toronto

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6. Set up centralized posting site where Agencies can post staffing needs
  - o A centralized email has been established for purposes of documentation concerning DS agencies posting their needs (Request for Deployment) and staffing agencies replying (Offer of Deployment)
  - o Response time for Requests for Deployment is: 30 minutes during the day and 3hours from 8pm-6pm.

## Results

1. How effective was this?
  - Very. It is currently being used to address the staffing crisis exacerbated by the 5<sup>th</sup> wave
2. Was this efficient? Was it quick to implement?
  - Planning for the staffing pool began Dec 22, 2021 and the master agreement was signed Jan 5, 2022. Staff are currently being drawn from the centralized staffing pool
3. Would you recommend this to other agencies?
  - Yes. We have evidence thus far that this has been an effective staffing solution during crisis management. The master agreement could be easily and quickly adapted to address the specific needs of other regions

## Additional Considerations:

- Participating agencies pay staff when drawing from the staffing pool using their budget; however, the retainer fee is to be covered by a lead agency. The retainer fee is then recouped through the Covid Relief Fund.
- This approach has demonstrated a holistic, collaborative approach to crisis planning. One that is fundamental to ensuring no agency sinks. It demonstrates alignment and cohesion across the sector.
- Collaboration with local planning tables, staffing agencies and HR personnel from the agencies involved.
- Legal:
  - o A master legal agreement is in place between each staffing agency and the lead DS agency acting on behalf of participating DS agencies.
  - o A subsidiary agreement is in place between each participating DS agency and the staffing agencies to govern utilization.
- For consideration: Looking ahead to post-pandemic sector recovery, could this staffing solution and business model be adapted to staff the sector?

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## Lessons learned:

- This is in essence a partnership and is an evolving one. Feedback is taken and the staffing solution will be adapted as needed.
  - o IT is currently redeveloping the email vehicle to a more robust fulfilment and tracking platform.

## Further contact Person:

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