



Advisory: Maintaining IT Services During a Health Incident

Dear colleagues,

As reports of possible COVID-19 coronavirus cases on university campuses increase, REN-ISAC has compiled a selection of tips and resources geared towards the IT professional.

In 2019, REN-ISAC facilitated six Blended Threat Resilience Workshops focusing on an emerging health threat case study similar to the current coronavirus situation. The workshop discussions between professionals from a variety of specialties (healthcare, information technology, information security, policies and procedures, administration, etc.) illuminated the following three important considerations for maintaining IT services and staff during an on-campus health incident.

- **Pre-planning for widespread workforce absences** due to an epidemic situation minimizes the disruption to teams when such events occur. Effective preparation requires documentation of each staff member's duties ranked by criticality and up-to-date cross-training materials. Leaders should also facilitate exercises on performing operational functions without key personnel to safeguard the continuation of critical functions with limited people.
- **Managing student employees during an outbreak** to ensure coverage of critical services, including help desks, is essential during an epidemic incident that could result in increased volume of technical issues. Evaluate student employee roles, determine if those roles are critical, and inform students what is expected of them if there is a risk of infection on campus. If student employees are expected to work during an outbreak, organizations should also consider the infrastructure changes necessary to accommodate students working remotely.
- **Instituting scheduled training for faculty in educational technology** prior to an epidemic situation decreases the number of service calls as faculty try to migrate exams and coursework online. Lack of training and online course preparation can cause strain on both educational technology teams and networks.

While the 2019 final report will be released later this year, we hope that these tips and the following additional resources will enable you and your organization to prepare for any possible future health incidents on your campus.

Additional Resources:

[Network Security Perspective on Coronavirus Preparedness](#), SANS Technology Institute
[Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist](#) (PDF), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[Continuity of Operations \(COOP\)/Business Continuity Planning](#), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)

[Continuity of Operations \(COOP\)](#), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)



[Commercial Facilities Pandemic Influenza Guides](#), Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

If you have any questions about the REN-ISAC Blended Threat Workshops—including how to take part in our 2020 workshop series—please contact [Sarah Bigham](#). This information is TLP:WHITE, so feel free to share it with your organization.