

MODULE 1

Introduction to Bioterrorism

Foundations of Public Health Preparedness for Nevada Nurses

Bioterrorism Preparedness for Nevada Nurses

4.0 Contact Hours | Nevada Board of Nursing Approved

Provider: NV-14175 | NAC 632.340 & NAC 632.355

Learning Objectives

1	Define bioterrorism and explain its significance in public health and nursing practice
2	Describe Nevada's regulatory framework for emergency preparedness (NAC 632.340 & 632.355)
3	Identify the nurse's essential role in bioterrorism prevention, preparedness, and response
4	Recognize historical bioterrorism events and their impact on public health policy
5	Apply epidemiological clues to distinguish bioterrorism from natural disease outbreaks

What is Bioterrorism?

Bioterrorism is the deliberate release of biological agents—including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and biological toxins—to cause illness or death in humans, animals, or plants. Unlike conventional terrorism that produces immediate, visible damage, bioterrorism attacks may go undetected for days or weeks until victims begin showing symptoms.

Key Insight

The goals of bioterrorism include instilling fear, disrupting society, undermining confidence in government, creating mass casualties, and overwhelming healthcare infrastructure.

Historical Bioterrorism Events

Year	Event	Agent	Impact
2001	Anthrax Letter Attacks	B. anthracis	22 infected, 5 deaths
1984	Rajneeshee Attack	Salmonella	751 cases in Oregon
1979	Sverdlovsk Outbreak	Anthrax (accidental)	66+ deaths in USSR

The Nurse's Critical Role

Nurses are on the front lines of bioterrorism detection and response. As the largest group of healthcare professionals and often the first point of contact for patients, nurses are uniquely positioned to detect unusual disease patterns and initiate appropriate responses.

- **Surveillance:** Monitor for unusual symptom clusters and report to public health authorities
- **Recognition:** Identify epidemiological clues suggesting intentional release

- **Infection Control:** Implement appropriate isolation, PPE, and decontamination procedures
- **Communication:** Coordinate with physicians, infection control, and public health
- **Patient Care:** Provide evidence-based clinical management during mass casualty events

Recognizing a Bioterrorism Event

Early recognition depends on identifying patterns that differ from natural outbreaks:

- Unusual geographic clustering with no clear natural source
- Disease occurring outside normal seasonal patterns
- Rare disease in previously healthy individuals
- Higher than expected severity or mortality rates
- Multiple simultaneous outbreaks of different diseases
- Cases linked to a common location or event
- Unusual antimicrobial resistance patterns

■ IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED

If you observe suspicious patterns, immediately notify: 1) Charge nurse and physician, 2) Hospital infection control, 3) Hospital administration, 4) Local health department. **DO NOT** wait for laboratory confirmation before reporting!

Nevada Regulatory Framework

Nevada nurses must understand the legal and regulatory requirements for bioterrorism preparedness. The Nevada State Board of Nursing establishes standards through the Nevada Administrative Code:

- **NAC 632.340:** Establishes continuing education requirements for CE providers
- **NAC 632.355:** Sets criteria for CE provider approval and course content

- ✓ Bioterrorism involves deliberate release of biological agents to cause harm
- ✓ Nurses are critical for early detection through pattern recognition
- ✓ Report suspicious patterns immediately—don't wait for lab confirmation
- ✓ Nevada regulations (NAC 632.340, 632.355) govern CE and reporting
- ✓ Historical events demonstrate threat reality and preparedness importance