



University of Pittsburgh
*Center for Public Health Preparedness
Graduate School of Public Health*

Mission

Centers for Public Health Preparedness (CPHP) train front-line workers in state and local health departments, preparing them to protect American citizens in the event of a public health emergency – inclusive of infectious, environmental, occupational, and terrorist threats. Created in 2000 with CDC funding, the network of 27 centers located in graduate, accredited schools of public health has already reached hundreds of thousands of public health workers through applied training and targeted technical expertise aimed at protecting communities in real-world crises. The CPHP network of world-renowned preparedness experts, convened and coordinated by the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH), ensures a strong public health response is available across the nation when and where it is needed.

Importance

The University of Pittsburgh Center for Public Health Preparedness (UPCPHP), housed within the Graduate School of Public Health's Center for Public Health Practice, links academic and practical expertise to state and local health agency needs to strengthen public health preparedness and response throughout the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania suffers from the lowest ratio of public health workers to population in the nation. In addition, a limited supply of training resources at the local and regional level challenges local response capacity, knowledge, and coordination. UPCPHP works to fill these gaps by providing a diverse array of activities designed to improve the Commonwealth's ability to successfully prepare and respond to disasters and outbreaks of all kinds. These services (usually free of charge) are provided to staff who work at local health departments, the state health department, emergency management agencies, schools and intermediate units, local leaders, fire, police, hospitals, and

clinics. In addition, the UPCPHP's activities cover the range of urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Accomplishments

- *Administers the Pennsylvania Preparedness Leadership Institute (PPLI).* UPCPHP administers this Institute which has been very successful in bringing together preparedness professionals across the state, including leaders from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, local health departments, Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH), emergency medical agencies, hospitals, regional counter-terrorism task forces, and public safety agencies for intensive training.
- *Trains school nurses.* UPCPHP has trained more than 17% of the state's school nurse population and school health consultants in less than two years using the innovative National Association of School Nurses "Disaster Preparedness" curriculum. Evaluation of the program shows a high level of success, with frequent comments such as "it really made us rethink and reevaluate our school disaster plan, and it gave us the tools to do it." UPCPHP anticipates training 75% of all the school nurses in the state by the end of 2009.
- *Trains rural responders.* Forty-eight of Pennsylvania's 67 counties are classified as rural, and none of these has a local health department. UPCPHP works with the University of Pittsburgh Center for Rural Health Practice and with the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to train first responders, doctors, nurses, emergency management administrators, and local leaders to respond to disasters and public health emergencies that affect their jurisdictions. The trainings are scheduled to continue through 2009 with the goal of reaching all 48 rural counties in the Commonwealth.
- *Educates judges, court staff and legislators about Public Health Laws.* UPCPHP works with judges, lawyers, legislators, and other experts to create a variety of truly unique resources, including a Bioterror/Biohazard Planning Guide for courthouses; a public health law Bench Book for the Pennsylvania Judiciary; policies and procedures needed to implement and enforce the public health orders that may be needed to control the spread of infectious disease in a large outbreak; and, a continu-

ation of operations plan for the legal system in the event of a widespread pandemic or disaster.

- *Teaches students and public health professionals.* UPCPHP created the Graduate Certificate Program in Public Health Preparedness and Disaster Response in 2003 at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. This innovative, interdisciplinary program was created to provide students and professionals with a practical academic foundation to further strengthen the public health workforce and infrastructure.
- *Works with communities and community colleges.* In 2006, UPCPHP began work with the City of Duquesne to develop improved preparedness for local residents living in a resource-poor region of the state. In addition, the Center is working with Butler and Lehigh County Community Colleges to develop preparedness and response training for community college students and audiences.
- *Provides critical information to professionals throughout the state.* UPCPHP provides the latest information and resources on emerging infectious diseases such as avian influenza and SARS; bioterrorism; floods and hurricanes; environmental disasters such as chemical spills; and more through its electronic newsletter, website, conferences, seminars, and publications. In addition, UPCPHP leaders have provided testimony to the Pennsylvania State Legislature on preparedness issues.

In 2006, PA DOH's Deputy Secretary for Health endorsed UPCPHP by stating, "Since UPCPHP's beginning in 2002, it has been a valued partner of the Department in its efforts to improve the public health emergency preparedness and response capacity of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. UPCPHP is contributing its resources to monitor and assess training needs, develop competency-based courses, deliver needed training and educational programs, and assist in evaluating the readiness of individuals and agencies."

Contact

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