



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 Heartland Center for Public Health Preparedness (HCPHP) has responded to state partners' identified needs for access to quality professional development in areas such as: public health roles in emergencies, incident command, emergency/crisis risk assessment, risk and crisis communications, cultural competence, public health law, crisis leadership, public health sciences, and multi-responder exercises/simulations. Through its Learning Management System, HCPHP offers numerous onsite and technology-mediated education and training programs, with 11,600 practitioners and first responders attending these programs in 2006. Courses included: "Crisis Leadership," "Public Health Incident Command (NIMS)," "Mental Health and Disasters," "Public Health Law," "School Preparedness," "Forensic Epidemiology," "Risk and Crisis Communication," and "Pandemic Flu," along with "SNS Full Scale/Tabletop Exercises." Pre- and post-competency-based program evaluations, which assessed program impact, increased knowledge and competence levels, indicated *statistically significant levels of improvement*.

Accomplishments

- In collaboration with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, HCPHP delivered a day-long risk communications workshop to 150 public health practitioners in three regions in Kansas. The workshop introduced appropriate risk communication strategies to manage negative reactions and community behaviors expected during a crisis situation. In support of national guidance, the program focused on pandemic flu preparedness and response. Methods included anticipating stakeholder needs/questions and the creation of pre-event message maps. Over 80% of participants indicated that they believed their competence in crisis communication was improved as a result of this program.
- HCPHP's primary niche area is leadership development, including *design of crisis leadership competencies and a related model curriculum*. Over 400 state and local public health administrators/managers and 100 elected officials and other first responders in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky attended these modules focused on "Systems and Critical Thinking Skills," "Anticipatory Thinking Skills," "Collective Decision Making and Decisive Action," "Risk Assessment," "Ethical Decision Making," "Emotional Intelligence," and "Planning for the Unthinkable."
- HCPHP provided pre-event incident command education and training and, consequently, collaborated with 12 agencies to *plan and participate in a regional Cardinals Baseball/Busch Stadium full-scale exercise* held in downtown St. Louis. HCPHP was also a member of the simulated incident command, directing the response of nearly 5,000 first responders and volunteers to a stadium/city-wide "disaster." Due to the success of the exercise, HCPHP has strengthened partnerships among state and local public health, business community, and emergency management/first responder agencies, especially the state and local public health/public safety agencies.

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