



## 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 south central region of the US has a large number of medically underserved areas, small rural health departments with limited budgets, and generally limited access to emergency and disaster education and training. The strategic partnership of public health practitioners and South Central Center for Public Health Preparedness (SCCPHP or Center) academics provides a comprehensive, regional approach to professional emergency and disaster workforce development. The SCCPHP provides training opportunities tailored to the unique needs of the region through onsite courses, web-based courses, satellite broadcasts, regional conferences, and newsletters. The Center also fosters and coordinates information sharing and relationships among state and local practice partners through regular conference calls, meetings, and joint training activities.

The SCCPHP works with state and local health agencies in the region to identify individual and organizational-level training needs in bioterrorism, infectious disease, food safety, school safety, radiological terrorism, and other

areas. These collaborative relationships with state and local public health agencies effectively utilize resources in producing training programs that meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. In partnership with the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (New Orleans), the SCCPHP has developed and conducted a number of assessments to evaluate the region's training needs (e.g., on-line surveys, paper and pencil surveys, interviews, and focus groups). SCCPHP needs assessments provide information regarding both individual-level, competency-based needs of the public health workforce in their area, as well as organizational-level factors influencing SCCPHP training in meeting critical competency-based training needs.

## Accomplishments

This past year, the Center reached nearly 36,000 people with over 75 different training opportunities. The SCCPHP recognizes the unique needs of the public health workforce by providing multiple methods of training:

### **Reaching Rural Public Health Responders with Distance-based Education**

The SCCPHP utilizes a Learning Management System for web-based course delivery and a state-of-the-art satellite broadcast system to reach rural public health workers with preparedness education and information. Evaluations have demonstrated high marks from participants with respect to content, instructor effectiveness, and distant learning format. Furthermore, across course offerings, respondents consistently report that they use the training to improve their knowledge and performance of emergency preparedness and response tasks. Learners also overwhelmingly indicate that the distant learning format is critical to their continued participation in the training and that they disseminate the information learned in the training to their colleagues.

### **Delivering On-site Courses, Workshops, Tabletop Exercises, and Training Materials**

Based on the results of needs assessments, the SCCPHP has developed, conducted, and evaluated on-site trainings, workshops and tabletop exercises tailored to the needs of the region. Topics include: *hurricane safety awareness, incident command, chemical terrorism, dirty bombs and radiological terrorism, crisis communication, bioterrorism awareness and response, and forensic epidemiology*. An example is a workshop, conducted with the Arkansas Department of Health and their external partners, that included a lecture from an international SARS expert

and a tabletop exercise focused on recognizing and responding to a SARS event. Evaluation results demonstrated significant increases in participants' competency-related knowledge and skills both immediately following the half-day training workshop as well as six months later. Participants also reported revising their emergency response plans and participating in subsequent trainings that addressed deficiencies identified in the workshop.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Center provided state health departments with "Safety Awareness for Responders to Hurricane Katrina: Protecting Yourself While Helping Others" training materials to distribute to employees working in affected areas. In addition, the Center arranged face-to-face safety awareness training for the Louisiana Office of Public Health and provided 200+ preparedness/first aid bags for volunteers to the Mississippi State Department of Health. The SCCPHP also produced live satellite broadcasts to address the region's needs in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Below are some of the topics presented:

- Staffing for Emergency Response and Recovery, August 2006
- Needs of Our Children: Pediatric Care Before, During and After Disasters, May 2006
- When Every Second Counts: Lessons Learned From Hurricane Katrina, February 2006
- Response Worker Health and Safety in a Post-Katrina World: Protecting the Protectors, October 2005

The SCCPHP conducted a post-Katrina needs assessment with state public health agencies to ensure training needs associated with the disaster were identified and documented. Hurricane Katrina serves as a reminder of the importance of and need for a public health workforce that is trained in emergency preparedness and response. In the next two to three years the SCCPHP will be conducting training to address needs in subject areas such as: *emergency planning for special populations; the role of community-based pharmacists in disaster response; psychological aspects of crisis response; how to remain functional at work during a crisis while dealing with the crises at home; communication during a crisis; stress management during a crisis; internal communication challenges within public health agencies; and, integration of disaster response at the local level.*

#### **Hosting Regional Conferences on Emergency Preparedness**

The SCCPHP has been instrumental in creating regional conferences on agroterrorism and food supply safety. Part-

nering with the Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, and the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, the SCCPHP hosted the largest forum in Alabama on the subject. The conference had more than 30 speakers from Alabama agencies and organizations, as well as representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, CDC, FBI, University of Montréal, and the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, with attendees from throughout the US.

*"The conference definitely gets two thumbs up", says Terry Slaten, Associate State Veterinarian with the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. "Our struggle is to reach out to people, and this was a perfect partnership for interagency cooperation. The presentations were excellent, and the networking at the lunches and between sessions was very important." Slaten says that the conference was also an important outreach to Alabama's farm producers. "Our main goal with producers is awareness," he notes, "and they are now starting to get the word out there. The Alabama Cattlemen's Association put a report on the conference on the front page of their Web site." Two regional conferences are planned in 2007 both of which will address topics important to both public health and agricultural security, including agroterrorism, zoonotic disease outbreaks, emergency response planning, vulnerability assessment, as well as other agricultural and food safety security issues. One will be held in Vicksburg, Mississippi in May, the other in Birmingham, Alabama in June.*

#### **Linking MPH Students with Practice Partners**

The SCCPHP created a program titled *Interns and Mentors Program for Action in Public Health Preparedness (IMPACT)* that contributes to recruitment and retention of highly qualified individuals into public health. State and local partners provide facilities and preceptors to guide MPH students through meaningful internships in emergency response and terrorism preparedness. In 2006, 25 MPH students were placed as IMPACT interns.

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