



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 UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters (CPHD) was established in 1997 to address the critical issues faced when a natural or human-generated disaster impacts a community. Based in the Department of Community Health Sciences in the UCLA School of Public Health, CPHD's approach is interdisciplinary and facilitates dialogue between public health and medicine, engineering, physical and social sciences, and emergency management. For the past decade, this unique philosophy has been applied to the education and training of practitioners and researchers, collaborative interdisciplinary research, and service to the community.

California is the nation's most populous state, and Los Angeles County is its second largest health department. There is a diversity of population density, geography, local economies, languages spoken, and cultural backgrounds that combine to make this region's emergency public health preparedness and response arguably the most challenging in the country.

CPHD is situated within Los Angeles County, a region that spans over 4,000 square miles and has more than 10 million residents. CPHD is an integral partner with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, providing scenario-driven emergency public health training to management staff, developing the county's Public Health Incident Command structure, providing incident command training and education to all eight Public Health Service Planning Areas, and planning and executing interagency exercises.

CPHD participates in on-site training sessions and exercises for bioterrorism readiness in local communities throughout the Western U.S., in both urban and rural settings. This real world experience with local health departments and health care providers provides Center staff with practical knowledge and realistic expectations to issues as complex as health system preparedness and response to bioterrorism events and public health emergencies.

Accomplishments

Including counties and cities throughout California, as well as state and local public health departments in Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Texas, Colorado, and Puerto Rico, CPHD has worked with over 50 health departments and thousands of public health workers to increase their emergency preparedness and response capacity. CPHD has collaborated with numerous health departments to review or write emergency response plans, identify training needs, develop and conduct trainings, and design, implement, and evaluate exercises. All activities are designed with objectives that are mapped to the recognized competencies in emergency preparedness.

Education and Training

CPHD has developed, conducted, and evaluated jurisdiction-specific, on-site trainings in *Public Health Preparedness and Incident Command* to over 2,300 individuals in 31 jurisdictions. Training topics are customized for each jurisdiction, built around local plans, legal responsibilities, and hazards, and include scenario-driven tabletop exercises. In order to measure the effect of the training on the participating agency, CPHD conducts evaluations of each training.

Exercises

CPHD exercises assess the competency of individuals and overall capacity of a public health agency to respond to

an emergency. In addition to assessing the response capacity of personnel, exercises allow the agency to practice decision-making and communications skills using the Incident Command System, assess the physical setting of the emergency operations center, identify future training and planning needs, and establish policies and procedures.

CPHD exercise scenarios require collaboration with the health department to define the scope and objectives and include scientifically rigorous methods, with the flow of information and decision-making challenges based on realistic data and circumstances. The actions undertaken by the agency are evaluated using measurable, standard evaluation objectives and methodologies that conform to Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) guidelines and are incorporated into an After Action Report (AAR) which highlights the exercise outcomes, problems encountered, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvements.

For example, CPHD conducted a series of exercises for the Orange County (CA) Health Care Agency that involved both multi-agency response planning as well as health department responses specific to bioterrorism emergencies. One exercise involved the activation of a mass smallpox vaccination clinic, which evaluated the agency's ability to register, triage, educate, and "vaccinate" over 1,200 live volunteers. This succession of exercises led to tangible changes in health department incident management practices, and significantly improved the understanding between public health and law enforcement leadership regarding the roles and responsibilities of their respective agencies.

Public Health Ready

CPHD served as the preparedness center for the City of Berkeley Department of Public Health in all phases of its Project Public Health Ready certification.

Training Needs Assessment

CPHD developed and conducted the *Training Needs Assessment* for the state of California's public health agencies. A total of 50 of the 61 health department jurisdictions in the state used this instrument and received individual reports to help guide emergency public health training and exercise activities.

Shareable Resources

- *Writing a Disaster Plan: A Guide for Health Departments*
- *Hazard Risk Assessment Instrument (HRAI)*
- *Head Start Disaster Preparedness Workbook*
- *Bioterrorism: Are You Prepared?*
- *Listen, Protect and Connect*
- *Interdisciplinary Response to Infectious Disease Emergencies*

Workshops and National Conferences

CPHD developed, conducted, and evaluated regional workshops in Arizona, California, Colorado, Minnesota, Texas, and Utah on specific, skill-based topics for over 400 health department employees to implement in their own agencies. Also, CPHD designs and hosts the annual UCLA Conference on Public Health and Disasters, the only national conference dedicated to the field, which, over the past four years, has attracted more than 900 participants from across the US as well as from Europe, Asia, Australia, and Latin America.

Curriculum

CPHD has the oldest multiple course curriculum in emergency public health in the country, offering nine distinct graduate level courses leading to a specialization in emergency public health.

Mutual Aid Field Response

CPHD staff provided on-site field assistance in response to a direct request from the University of Texas Center for Public Health Preparedness to conduct and ultimately lead daily health assessments for thousands displaced by Hurricane Katrina (2005) who were mass sheltered in four government operated shelters.

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