

Priorities and Action Plans

The Preparedness Policy Committee met Sept. 20 in Minneapolis, MN to set priorities for 2017 and develop action plans to achieve these priorities.

Public Health Emergency Capacity Funding

Due to many circumstances in the past decade, the public health system has been forced to respond to new threats with decreased funding and resource capacity. The public health and healthcare systems are an integral part of preparedness activities, yet they need increased authority and funding to ensure that their response capacity continues. Our goal is for a well-funded, high capacity system that can meet the needs to respond to the health and safety of the public. To achieve these goals, the system must have:

- Adequate funding and proper administration models for day-to-day programs, such as PHEP and HPP. This includes identification of what an ideal S/T public health preparedness system looks like; including funding levels, and processes that would need to be in place for execution and capacity growth.
- Sustained federal appropriation and proper administration of the Public Health Emergency Fund; including a correct reimbursement mechanism.

Critical Infrastructure Fragility

The public health system now faces novel, complex cascading threats never seen before (i.e., Zika virus as a vector-borne, sexually transmitted disease; hospital system files stolen and held for ransom, etc.). These events highlight the need for proper risk communication and planning for complex responses that affect the critical infrastructure vital to public health prevention and response activities and services. Planning activities may include:

- Educating S/T leaders on critical (public health) infrastructure systems vulnerable to natural or man-made threats.
- Defining the role of public health in cyber security activities; conducting mitigation activities to minimize vulnerabilities.
- Training S/T public health leaders on how best to deliver risk communication messages that are correct and appropriate for diverse populations.
- Researching the feasibility of a complex national level exercise that includes testing critical infrastructure through a multifaceted complex scenario.
 - Scenario should engage multiple response elements and have the potential to generate media attention to promote other identified priorities. (Ex: Dark Sky scenario that could include unknown viruses or diseases; affects to power grids and other critical infrastructure and large populations)

Public Health Emergency Response Workforce Preparedness

“Effective public health preparedness requires a workforce with both knowledge and skills required for full engagement in planning, response, and evaluation activities for disasters.”¹ Due to diminishing resources, many health departments are forced to use its non-preparedness workforce for response activities. To assure knowledge and familiarity with preparedness and response expectations, there is a need for adequate training and performance-based capabilities to ensure understanding of the preparedness cycle and responsibilities. In addition, the professional backgrounds and expertise of new State Health Officials varies. To assure their knowledge and familiarity with preparedness and response expectations, adequate training is necessary for all levels; from new to mid-level executives. Education activities may include:

- Ensure that all public health workers are competent in emergency preparedness response; including development, recruitment and retention of staff and future executives.
- Create and provide onboarding and professional development opportunities for State Health Officials; allow SHOs to share experiences consistently through meetings or one-on-one mentorship.

Public Health Role in Mass Violence

Mass shootings and violence continue to plague the health and safety of our nation. Traditional response agencies such as law enforcement, emergency medicine and homeland security are seen as response leaders. However, as mass violence continues to increase, our communities are coming to grips with the need to treat the whole person and community in response to these incidents. While not seen as mainstream response leaders, the public health community has an active role in the prevention and response to mass violence; including hospital and healthcare system preparedness and mental/behavior health treatment and more.

- Define and educate the public health enterprise on its role in mass violence prevention and response.
- Evaluate current scholarly research in the field of countering violent extremism.
- Educate the public health enterprise on the role and responsibilities of traditional response partners in mass violence prevention and response.
- Educate traditional mass violence prevention and response agencies (law enforcement, homeland security, etc.) on the role of public health and how collaboration can be beneficial.
- Develop a forum for SHOs and other S/T leaders to share experiences and learn how to prepare and respond to a mass violence event.

¹ Chandler T, Qureshi K, Gebbie KM, Morse SS. Teaching Emergency Preparedness to Public Health Workers: Use of Blended Learning in Web-Based Training. *Public Health Reports*. 2008;123(5):676-680.