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*“Health Centers should continually test and evaluate the effectiveness of the EMP and make adjustments as necessary. Exercises reveal what works, what does not, and what is needed to enhance the effectiveness of the EMP.”*

~ HRSA BPHC PIN 98-23

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Here's a fun way to **involve the whole family in emergency planning**. The Department of Homeland Security has a great [website](#) for kids that provides games and activities to help your family develop its own emergency plan.

**Hazard Vulnerability Analysis**

[Click here](#) to access the HVA templates on IPHCA's website.



# Emergency Management Newsletter



## The Importance of Emergency Plan Exercises

First articulated by the Institute of Medicine in 1988, public health can be described as “what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions for people to be healthy.” With an exhaustive and ever increasing list of hazardous scenarios facing the nation, the field of public health has adopted a distinct responsibility in emergency preparedness planning. To achieve this position as vanguards of individual health, public health professionals must first embrace a professional culture that includes emergency preparedness planning.

Armed with limited budgetary resources, a demanding operations schedule, and in some cases, personnel shortages, Community Health Centers (CHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) face numerous challenges in adopting additional priorities. Another challenge to the process is the delay or failure by national and local governing bodies to consistently disseminate systems critical information to CHCs and FQHCs in regards to their role in the broader preparedness picture. While attaining National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliance for emergency preparedness appears challenging, the remainder of this newsletter will acquaint planners with competency-based educational training, templates on conducting preparedness exercises, and how to incorporate emergency management planning into center scheduling so as to remain flexible enough to address the primary mission of primary health care: the patient.

Effective preparedness planning must always begin with the individual, as it is much easier to teach personnel who understand their responsibility in the community. According to Parker and colleagues (2005), such training should focus on both physical and psychological topics that personnel and their families face during crisis scenarios. Upon securing stakeholder buy-in, the exercise project manager must continue to develop the foundation of support by designing a project management timeline and establishing milestones. Creating a timeline allows the planning team to visualize benchmark goals and understand the overarching mission of the preparedness project.

The next step in program design, as outlined by the Department of Homeland Security (2007), is to identify project objectives and develop an exercise scenario. Project managers must keep in mind that the scope of the exercise and its accompanying goals must not be overly ambitious as each part or objective of an emergency plan cannot possibly be measured within the constraints of a single exercise.

Choosing an exercise type that best meets a center's requirements can be achieved through an analysis of the capabilities the center is reviewing; previously conducted training; and the available resources. A table of the seven exercise types promoted by Homeland Security has been provided within this newsletter (*see page 3*).

Exercise design must also be relevant to the personnel involved, and based upon a [hazard vulnerability analysis](#) of the surrounding community. Scenarios that are realistic or that occur on a regular basis, such as infectious disease outbreaks, are more likely to sustain the interest of participating stakeholders.

## The Importance of Emergency Plan Exercises (con't)

### Key Components of a Successful Exercise:

1. Has support from leaders and participants
2. Has a realistic timetable
3. Has clear scenario and ground rules
4. Is as realistic as possible
5. Identifies and involves potential outside participants
6. Includes structured evaluation
7. Facilitates positive change

The Harvard School of Public Health (2006) developed a toolkit to help project coordinators implement preparedness exercises. Above all else, the Harvard toolkit stresses that an effective preparedness exercise requires detailed planning. Listed in the box to the left is a sampling of the key components identified as essential to a successful exercise.

The final component in exercise project management is the evaluation stage, which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of a center's preparedness plan as observed during the exercise. Evaluators must be provided with measurable objectives and a medium by which to record observations. Participants should also be solicited for their opinions on how to improve both the plan enacted, and the preparedness exercise. Data collected from the exercise must then be used to revise the preparedness plan to incorporate the amendments discussed during the scenario.

The remainder of this newsletter will provide resources intended to assist personnel when conducting preparedness activities. Functional exercises serve as valuable tools for assessing preparedness planning and evaluating areas for improvement, while demonstrating an effort to protect and prepare the surrounding community from both natural and manmade threats. Addressing deficiencies or vulnerabilities prior to an actual incident will allow FQHCs and CHCs to answer the call made by the Institute of Medicine: "assure the conditions for people to be healthy." By having a plan, training your staff, and exercising the components of your plan, you can assure that the community health center will be a vital resource in the event of a disaster.

~ Article by *Dennis Peyton, IPHCA Emergency Management Intern*

#### References:

- Harvard School of Public Health. (2006). Toolkit to assist public health in conducting preparedness exercises. Available at: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hcphp/products-and-training/exercises-and-drills/index.html> Accessed: May 30, 2008.
- Institute of Medicine. *The Future of Public Health*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 1988
- Parker, C.L., Barnett, D.J., Fews, A.L., Blodgett, D., & Links, J.M. (2005) The road map to preparedness: A competency-based approach to all-hazards emergency readiness training for the public health workforce. *Public Health Reports*. 120: 504-514
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2007). Volume I: HSEEP overview and exercise program management. Available at: <https://hseep.dhs.gov/support/VolumeI.pdf> Accessed: May 30, 2008.

*"The objectives of testing Emergency Management Plans through exercises are to minimize confusion and mistakes that may occur during an actual emergency."*

~ HRSA BPHC

## Lessons Learned

### Disaster Averted: Fire in Kokomo IHC facility

When a fire occurred at Indiana Health Centers, Inc. (IHC) at Kokomo disaster was averted through their community relationships and the diligence of the staff. IHC called upon the community, who recognized that IHC was an integral part of the continuum of care, and within four hours the center was back in business.

Two local hospitals assisted in getting IHC operational again; one provided an empty floor with phones so IHC could occupy the space to communicate with clients and house IHCs' 20,000 medical records. Another provided temporary storage for much needed flu vaccine. Lynn Clothier, IHC CEO, said, "The community was so awesome that IHC was able to function at almost full capacity while being displaced for 90 days."

One challenge faced by IHC was that their emergency manual was in the fire-damaged facility. To that, Lynn Clothier states, "There is no way to anticipate everything; including not having access to the manual, so you need to have a lot of it in your head."

One way to make sure that business operations can be resumed as quickly as possible is to go through drills with the staff so that the plan is internalized and in the event of a disaster the response will seem second-nature.

# Exercise Types

Utility/Purpose		Type of Player Action	Duration	Real-Time Play?
Discussion-Based Exercises	Familiarize players with current plans, policies, agreements, and procedures; develop new plans, policies, agreements, and procedures	Notional; player actions are imaginary or hypothetical	Rarely exceeding 8 hours	No
Seminar	Provide overview of new or current plans, resources, strategies, concepts or ideas	N/A	2-5 hours	No
Workshop	Achieve specific goal or build project (e.g., exercise objectives, SOPs, policies, plans)	N/A	3-8 hours	No
Tabletop Exercise (TTX)	Validate plans and procedures by utilizing a hypothetical scenario to drive participant discussions	Notional	4-8 hours	No
Game	Explore decision-making process and examine consequences of those decisions	Notional	2-5 hours	No
Operations-Based Exercise	Validate plans, policies, agreements, and procedures; clarify roles and responsibilities; identify resource gaps	Actual; player action mimics reaction, response, mobilization, and commitment of personnel and resources	May be hours, days, or weeks, depending on purpose, type, and scope of the exercise	Yes
Drill	Validate a single operation or function of an emergency	Actual	2-4 hours	Yes
Functional Exercise (FE)	Evaluate capabilities, functions, plans, and staffs of Incident Command, Unified Command, intelligence centers, or other multi-agency coordination centers (e.g., EOCs)	Command staff actions are actual; movement of other personnel, equipment, or adversaries is simulated	4-8 hours or several days or weeks	Yes
Full-Scale Exercise (FSE)	Validate plans, policies, procedures, and cooperative agreements developed in previous exercises through their actual implementation and execution during a simulated scenario; includes actual mobilization of resources, conduct of operations, and integrated elements of functional exercise play (e.g., EOCs, command posts)	Actual	One full day or several days or weeks	Yes

(Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP): Volume 1)

## Suggested Resources:

[www.whatsyourrq.org/index.shtml](http://www.whatsyourrq.org/index.shtml) ~ The Readiness Quotient test is a simple online survey to assess how prepared individuals or groups are for an emergency.

[www.hseep.dhs.gov](http://www.hseep.dhs.gov) ~ Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)

[rand.org/health/projects/php/](http://rand.org/health/projects/php/) ~ RAND Public Health Preparedness Database. This website contains a searchable database of exercises used to evaluate public health preparedness.

[www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Publication\\_158\\_Table\\_top-exercise.pdf](http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Publication_158_Table_top-exercise.pdf) ~ World Health Organization. A guide to conduct tabletop exercises.

[training.fema.gov/](http://training.fema.gov/) ~ FEMA Emergency Management Institute. Provides news updates relevant to emergency management, online competency based courses, and resources to conduct emergency response activities.

[www.in.gov/dhs/index.htm](http://www.in.gov/dhs/index.htm) ~ Indiana specific emergency preparedness information.

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For questions or comments, or to schedule a site visit for help in implementing an emergency plan exercise, please contact someone on IPHCA's Emergency Management Team (listed below).



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