A Framework for Assessing Regional Public Health Preparedness

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Learning Objectives

• Describe the importance of regional planning for public health emergencies.

• List the topic areas to consider in regional preparedness planning.

• Explain how the Regional Assessment Checklist can be used by state and local preparedness officials.
• Preparedness goals exist at the federal level (e.g., for SNS) and at the state level (e.g., in CDC grant guidance).
  – No clear definition as to what constitutes preparedness at a regional level.

• RHAs in all ten regions need a consistent framework for assessing preparedness at a regional level.
The Ten HHS Regions
Poll Question 1

How informed am I about preparedness activities across my region?

A. Very well
B. Well
C. Minimally
D. Not at all
Project Goals

- Develop a conceptual framework and a checklist to assess regional public health emergency preparedness

- RHAs will use the framework to:
  - Identify cross-border issues related to public health preparedness
  - Assist HHS Regional Emergency Coordinators in assessing cross-border preparedness needs of their region
  - Work collaboratively with state public health officials to identify and address cross-border preparedness issues
Defining Regional Preparedness

A set of active systems, agreements, and other procedures in place at a regional level (i.e., across state and international jurisdictions) to facilitate cross-border collaboration among health officials in preparing for and responding to disasters or other public health threats.
Defining *Regional & Preparedness*

- **Regional**: Activities that occur across state/provincial and international borders

- **Evidence of Preparedness**: A documented set of active systems, protocols, procedures, and agreements to facilitate collaboration during a response to a disaster or other health threat
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Functional Areas</strong></th>
<th><strong>Resources</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Management</td>
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<td>Epidemiology</td>
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<td>Lab</td>
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<td>Environmental Health</td>
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<td><strong>Cross-Cutting Areas</strong></td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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<td>Legal</td>
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<td>Governance</td>
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Poll Question 2

When I consider the transport of resources across borders during a PH emergency, the following resource is most important:

A. Staff
B. Supplies/Specimen
C. Data/Information
D. Patients
Project Process

- Logic Model
- Literature Review
- Defining Regional Preparedness
- Conceptual Framework Matrix
- Key Informant Interviews
- Cross-Border Workshop
- Checklist
Interview Details

- 23 telephone interviews
- Key informants included representatives from:
  - Emergency Preparedness (11)
  - Epidemiology (4)
  - Public Health Lab (4)
  - Environmental Health (2)
  - Public Health Law (1)
  - Risk Communication (1)
Key informants represented:

- Alaska (4)
- British Columbia (1)
- Idaho (3)
- Oregon (7)
- Washington (6)
- Region X (2)
Themes from Interviews

• Tools/Structures that exist in Region X
  - Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Arrangement (PNEMA)
  - Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)
  - Region X Public Health Laboratory MOU
  - Informal, relationship-based, networks
Interview Findings

- **Staff**
  - Formal agreements and protocols to address legalities of sharing staff
  - Resource typing for staff
  - Regular training on preparedness and incident command systems (ICS)

- **Supplies**
  - Resource typing and resource inventories
  - Formal agreements to share supplies
  - Drill/exercise logistics chain
Interview Findings (continued)

- Specimens
  - Agreement to exchange specimen/samples
  - Protocols for transportation of specimen/samples during an event
  - Protocols for chain of custody

- Data/Information
  - Regional agreements and systems for exchanging data
  - Protocols for sharing data
Interview Findings (continued)

- Patients/Evacuees
  - Ensuring safe transportation across borders
  - Working with CMS to ensure Medicaid and insurance coverage in other states/provinces
  - Working with federal partners to enable transport between international borders

- Communication
  - Consistent messaging for risk communication
  - Protocols for improving communication of staff on the ground during a response
  - Communication with special needs populations
Interview Findings (continued)

- Legal
  - Expand PNEMA in Region X; explore congressionally approved agreement in other regions
  - Balance between formal & informal agreements

- Governance
  - Appoint a working group to lead regional preparedness efforts
  - Exchange plans and contact lists across the region
  - Develop a decision-making structure for multi-jurisdictional response
  - Regionally plan and implement drills/exercises
Cross-Border Workshop

- Annual meeting of Northwestern U.S. states and Western Canadian provinces.
- Convened by Washington State Department of Health and British Columbia, with support from the CDC.
- Presented initial findings from interviews, and sought feedback.
Several U.S. Regions have initiatives to enhance “regional preparedness”, e.g.,

- Mid-America Alliance (MAA)
- International Emergency Management Assistance Compact (IEMAC)
- Great Lakes Border Health Initiative (GLBHI)
- Security & Prosperity Partnership (SPP)

These initiatives have differing emphases and approaches regarding regional preparedness.

Despite these differences, there were striking parallels with the conceptual framework developed in this project.
Development of Checklist

- Based on our findings, a checklist was developed to serve as a tool for regional and state health officials.
- It is meant to foster a comprehensive consideration and assessment of cross-border public health preparedness.
- Its use is entirely voluntary.
Format of the Checklist

- Divided into six categories:
  - Staff
  - Supplies
  - Specimen/Lab Samples
  - Data/Information
  - Patients/Evacuees
  - Communication
  - Governance
Checklist Example: Specimen/Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist Item</th>
<th>Existing Structures</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement to exchange specimen/samples during an event, including issues of compensation and reimbursement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protocols for transportation of specimen/samples during an event.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protocols for chain of custody.</td>
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## Checklist Example: Data/Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist Item</th>
<th>Existing Structures</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
<th>Partially (explain)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement and systems for exchanging data in a response.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protocols for secure, efficient data exchange (ideally electronically).</td>
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<td>Protocols for sharing data: what should be shared, who owns the data, when it should be shared, with whom, etc.</td>
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Implications for States

- Region X has many established tools in place (e.g., PNEMA) that are not available in other regions.
  - Project was conducted in Region X because of these structures, but the checklist is intended to benefit other regions as well.
- Many parallels between regional planning efforts in Region X and other regions in U.S.
- All states/provinces should consider cross-border aspect of preparedness.
Poll Question 3

In the future, I intend to learn more about public health regional preparedness by:

A. Attending conferences
B. Searching the web
C. Attending Hot Topics sessions
D. All of the above
Goals for the future

• Share this new tool with the other RHAs and their state and federal partners, and with other regional processes now under way (e.g., SPP, MAA).

• Consider (in partnership with State and regional health officials) whether and how to use this checklist to promote cross-border preparedness.

• Assess the utility of this tool in the coming years.
Thank You

- All of our interviewees!
- Susan Allen, OR
- Dick Mandsager, AK
- Mary Selecky, WA
- Richard Schultz, ID
- Wayne Dauphinee, BC
- Andy Stevermer, DHHS
- Jack Thompson, Luann D’Ambrosio, and staff at NWCPHP
The checklist is available to download at:
www.nwcphp.org/training/hot-topics/2007-hot-topics/

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