



Pandemic flu preparedness

This publication would be incomplete without acknowledging the massive amount of work for H1N1 done by public health workers throughout 2009. Following the identification of a new strain of influenza (H1N1) in April 2009, the public health community was absorbed with tracking and responding to the pandemic.

The Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (NWC PHP) has provided a number of services for our region regarding H1N1, including research pilot projects and up-to-date resources. During both waves of the recent H1N1 influenza outbreak, one of our faculty members, Andy Stergachis, has served as pharmacy advisor on the response team at Public Health — Seattle & King County (PHSKC). He has worked closely with the health department and the pharmacy community on the distribution of antiviral stockpiles and pharmacy-based vaccinations.

The history of influenza pandemics in the 20th century has highlighted the importance of preparedness. NWC PHP has been particularly involved with pandemic flu preparedness since 2006

when it began assisting the University of Washington (UW) with planning, implementing, and evaluating a university-wide pandemic preparedness exercise. In 2009, NWC PHP created, implemented, and evaluated a tabletop exercise for the UW School of Public Health (SPH), which emphasized pandemic preparedness and business continuity planning. (tabletop available at www.nwcp hp.org.)

We continue to work closely with SPH in a variety of activities stemming from this exercise. Pandemic influenza preparedness and response have been built into the curricula for the courses and certificate programs SPH offers to students enrolled in the University's health sciences schools.

Preparedness is for everyone, so we have made the resources from these exercises available at no charge. NWC PHP has also assisted other organizations with their pandemic flu preparedness, such as PHSKC, where we have been involved with planning, implementing, and evaluating a coordinated series of pandemic preparedness exercises.

National accreditation

The Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (NWC PHP) is a resource for the practice community as our partners begin seeking national accreditation. Until now, public health has not had a national accreditation process. The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) was established by funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to establish a credible, valuable national accreditation process to assist and improve public health practice.

Public health accreditation will be voluntary, but it is anticipated that many state, local, territorial, and tribal public health agencies will seek accreditation because of positive internal and external effects, such as increased morale and accountability.

PHAB has defined standards for public health agencies and has set up an accreditation process that is designed to be practical and effective. To test the process and standards, PHAB is conducting beta tests at 30 public health agencies across the country. The selected health departments represent the nation's variety of size, governance, region, and population. The beta sites will provide valuable feedback to PHAB on accreditation process and outcomes.

Three beta sites are located in our region: the Washington Department of Health, the Wyoming Department of Health, and the Health Department in Deschutes County, Oregon. Site reviews will likely take place this June.

In addition to multiple faculty members working closely with PHAB, NWC PHP also conducted a region-wide needs assessment that will help our partners collect information for accreditation. We will offer training, research, and evaluation assistance to our partners as they begin to analyze their agencies and processes.



Above, Kaye Bender, President and CEO of the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) was a plenary speaker at NWC PHP's 2009 Summer Institute for Public Health Practice (page 4).