

27. Public Health Preparedness

Goal

Upgrade and improve state and local public health jurisdictions' preparedness response to bioterrorism, outbreaks of infectious disease, and other public health threats and emergencies.

Overview

Disaster and emergency planning is an essential public health service—one that has been given short shrift until the last few years. Recent events such as the statewide anthrax scare, September 11th, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the possibility of an avian flu pandemic, have brought home the importance of adequate planning, preparedness, and appropriate response to disasters and emergencies. Specific objectives relating to the added emphasis on public health preparedness are included in this new chapter.

The Department for Public Health is charged with utilizing funds made available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to upgrade both state and local public health jurisdictions and to prepare them for a timely and appropriate response to bioterrorism, outbreaks of infectious disease, and other public health threats and emergencies. Because such events (as bioterrorism) can occur both at state and local levels, response capacity must be assured so that all affected jurisdictions are readied to the maximum capacity and can respond in a reasonable length of time. Education of state and local public health agencies, key policy makers, partners and stakeholders and their recognition of the importance of adequate disaster and emergency planning are paramount in making Kentucky a proactive state—one that is prepared for any possible catastrophic event.

Summary of Progress

Since this is a new chapter with baselines set at mid-decade status, a summary of progress will not be provided.

Progress toward Achieving Each HK 2010 Objective

27.1N. (NEW OBJECTIVE) Increase to 100 percent the percentage of local health departments (LHDs) that distribute to key policy makers, partners and stakeholders in their jurisdiction, a periodic newsletter regarding the nature and scope of public health surveillance, investigation, response, and control.

Data Source: A 2005 survey of local health departments

Baseline: 35 percent of LHDs issue periodic newsletters and public health announcements incorporating information on disaster and emergency planning and preparedness

HK 2010 Target: 100 percent of LHDs

Mid-Decade Status: 35 percent of LHDs

Strategies to Achieve Objective:

- The Department for Public Health, Disaster Preparedness Branch will strongly promote the development and distribution of newsletters (on at least a quarterly basis) to Judge Executives and other Board of Health members informing them of recent events pertaining to bioterrorism and possible infectious disease entities.
- Publication and distribution of newsletters will be a required component of each LHD's Disaster Plan.
- Sample newsletters from LHD's currently complying may be provided as an example or guide of what is required.
- Public health announcements will be prepared by LHD's on an as needed basis and shared with local law enforcement officials, hospitals and private practitioners.

27.2N. (NEW OBJECTIVE) Increase response capacity by 20 percent by adding appropriately trained staff, such as epidemiologists, to conduct surveillance activities and investigate outbreaks as well as other public health emergencies.

Data Source: A review of the number of epidemiologists on staff

Baseline: 10 epidemiologists at the state level; 17 regional epidemiologists (2005)

HK 2010 Target: 12 epidemiologists at the state level; 20 regional epidemiologists

Mid-Decade Status: 10 epidemiologists at the state level; 17 regional epidemiologists (2005)

Strategies to Achieve Objective:

- Secure additional funding for epidemiologic staff and associated operating expenses

- Improve the training for epidemiologists so that they may be kept current on diseases and recent information pertinent to infectious events that may involve them locally, regionally, or at the state level
- Conduct public emergency interventions when necessary at the state and local levels, providing interpretation of clinical and laboratory information
- Institute public health control and protection measures for emergency response workers
- Maintain lines of communication between local health care employees, local health departments, and the state Department to assure management of secure information

27.3N. (NEW OBJECTIVE) Develop and maintain a registry of all public health personnel, other health care personnel, and security staff needed to maintain public order; EMS staff needed to transport ill patients; and hospital staff, private physicians and their staff who could serve on health care response teams in the event of a local, state, or national emergency.

HK 2010 Target: 95 percent complete

Mid-Decade Status: Registry initiated during response to Hurricane Katrina

Strategies to Achieve Objective:

- Review and incorporate in the Registry individuals from the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)
- Review and incorporate in the Registry individuals from the KHELPS registry of medical and professional volunteers
- Review and incorporate individuals from the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Health Professions Volunteers, (ESAR-VHP)
- Assure that individuals are aware that they are part of the Registry
- Update the Registry at least semi-annually

27.4N. (NEW OBJECTIVE) Develop an integrated, automated system to link infectious zoonotic disease information identified at the state diagnostic labs with the surveillance, identification, and tracking system of the Kentucky Electronic Public Health Records System (KYEPHRS).

HK 2010 Target: 85 percent of database complete

Mid-Decade Status: No system available at present. The Hurricane Katrina emergency underscored the need for communication to evacuees

and response personnel on how to appropriately handle animals during a disaster or emergency.

Strategies to Achieve Objective:

- Provide a liaison and improve communication between the State Veterinarian's Office and the Emergency Preparedness Branch
- Assure data link access for both the State Veterinarian's Office and the Department for Public Health to query an information pool when presented with suspicious or suspected cases of infectious zoonotic diseases.
- Designate one focal point for providing information to the public, local health departments, and local response teams on appropriate handling of animals in an emergency/disaster situation

Contributors

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27. Public Health Preparedness – Summary Table

| Summary of Objectives | Baseline | HK 2010 Target | Mid-Decade Status | Progress | Data Source |
|--|---|---|---|----------|---|
| 27.1N. Increase to 100 percent the percentage of local health departments (LHDs) that distribute to key policy makers, partners, and stakeholders in their jurisdiction, a periodic newsletter regarding the nature and scope of public health surveillance, investigation, response, and control. | 35% produce newsletters (2005) | 100% | 35% (2005) | N/A | Survey of LHDs |
| 27.2N. Increase response capacity by 20 percent by adding appropriately trained staff, such as epidemiologists, to conduct surveillance activities and investigate outbreaks as well as other public health emergencies. | 10 state epis 17 regional epis (2005) | 12 state epis 20 regional epis (2005) | 10 state epis 17 regional epis (2005) | N/A | Review number of epidemiologists on staff |
| 27.3N. Develop and maintain a registry of all public health personnel, other health care personnel, and security staff needed to maintain public order; EMS staff needed to transport ill patients; and hospital staff, private physicians and their staff who could serve on health care response teams in the event of a local, state or national emergency. | Registry began in September 2005 | Registry 95% complete | Registry began in September 2005 | N/A | Registry of personnel |
| 27.4N. Develop an integrated, automated system to link infectious zoonotic disease information identified at the state diagnostic labs with the surveillance, identification and tracking system of the Kentucky Electronic public health Records System (KYEPHRS) | Will begin system in 2006 | 85% of system complete | Will begin system in 2006 | N/A | Integrated database flag-system |

N = New objective

N/A = Only baseline data are available. Not able to determine progress at this time.