

14-09

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Community Resilience

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) urges local health departments to define and promote community resilience related to local public health and medical efforts. The following federal guidelines or national standards should be used to develop practices that expand and enhance current community-based activities and better align and integrate traditional public health and public health emergency preparedness¹:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Preparedness capabilities
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Whole Community Initiative
- The Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response's Healthcare Preparedness capabilities
- The National Disaster Recovery Framework
- National Health Security Strategy
- The National Preparedness Goal
- Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act

In addition to these guidelines, NACCHO urges the federal government to determine metrics by which a local community can measure progress toward increased resiliency.

NACCHO recommends that local health departments partner with traditional and non-traditional organizations and trusted local leaders to build relationships, leverage resources, and integrate diverse skills into health preparedness activities. NACCHO specifically recommends that local health departments do the following:

- Engage with local fire and police departments, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, tribal organizations, and other neighborhood-level organizations to build trust and connections within the community.
- Identify and assess the unique risks facing vulnerable populations and integrate those needs into local preparedness planning and training.²
- Recruit volunteer community members to fill in gaps of service. They may form community emergency response teams and local Medical Reserve Corps units for additional support in public health and emergency preparedness activities.
- Engage directly with citizens to promote a culture of self-preparedness in the community.

Justification

The National Health Security Strategy describes resilient communities as those that have robust social networks and health systems that support recovery after adversity. They are prepared to



take deliberate, collective action in the face of an incident and have developed material, physical, social, and psychological resources that function as a buffer to these incidents and help protect people's health.³

A community with a strong social support system, cohesiveness across local agencies and organizations, effective local leadership, and individuals with knowledge and resources to stay healthy and safe is able to rebound quickly from adverse events. Critical lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy and the H1N1 pandemic of 2009 demonstrate that a lack of trust and absence of sustainable engagement with community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and other neighborhood-level organizations create significant disparities in health outcomes of citizens following emergencies and disasters.¹ Local health officials that build the networks and systems prior to events that may lead to poor public health outcomes will ensure a more effective response and recovery for their community.

For local emergencies, the federal government will generally play a supporting role to state and local efforts; as such, each local health department can be a community anchor, forming a foundation for community resilience through the application of national capabilities and federal guidance, alignment with local community services, and promotion of citizen responsibility. Through these recommendations, local health departments can support their community's ability to prepare for, withstand, recover, and minimize impact after incidents that threaten public health.

References

1. Plough, A., Fielding, J. E., Chandra, A., Williams, M., Eisenman, D., Wells, K.B., et al. (2013). Building community disaster resilience: Perspectives from a large urban county department of public health. *Government, Law, and Public Health Practice*, 103(7), 1190-1197.
2. Federal Emergency Management Agency. (August 8, 2012). About Community Emergency Response Team webpage. Retrieved March 2014, from <http://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams/about-community-emergency-response-team>
3. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (December 7, 2011). The National Health Security Strategy webpage. Retrieved April 2014, from <http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/authority/nhss/strategy/>

Record of Action

Proposed by NACCHO Surge Management Workgroup

Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors

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