

University of Massachusetts Medical School

Community Health Clerkship

Health Advocacy

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Emergency Preparedness and Response to Bioterrorism, Pandemic Flu, and Mass Casualty Events

Advocacy Organizations	
What are some local organizations that do advocacy work?	Worcester DPH, WRMRC,
What are some state organizations that do advocacy work?	Mass. DPH, MEMA, MMRC, Mass. DMAT MA1 / MA2
What are some national organizations that do advocacy work?	CDC, Red Cross, FEMA, HHS / DPH
What are some international organizations that do advocacy work?	IFRC, WHO
Advocacy Issue	
Looking at the state, national, or international level, at the websites or information from the organizations listed above, what is a major area of advocacy at this time? <i>Try to choose an advocacy issue that will in some way affect the local community.</i> Advocacy specifically refers to promoting legislation, policies or specific budgetary appropriations that positively affect a health issue. This may occur through decreasing barriers to accessing health services, providing an infrastructure conducive to effective health promotion programs, or directly increasing the resources and infrastructure of the public health system	Current national advocacy initiatives are focusing directly on emergency preparedness on the part of individuals and households within local communities. Organizations such as the CDC, American Red Cross, and Department of Homeland Security are engaging in combined advocacy efforts to provide internet resources that help households to be prepared in the event of pandemic flu, bioterrorism, and natural disasters. The recurrent message of this advocacy initiative focuses upon the theme “Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed.” ¹ In addition to internet resources provided by the CDC, Red Cross, and DHS, The White House recently proclaimed September as National Preparedness Month. ² Responding to this proclamation, 1,758 national, state, and local member organizations of the national preparedness coalition provided information and sponsored events to promote emergency preparedness in communities nationwide. ³ This emphasis appears to be ongoing with a \$751 million dollar FY2008 budget request for The National Office of Preparedness and Response to support communities to prevent, respond to and recover from disasters and other public health emergencies. ⁴
What specific law, policy, or appropriation is being advocated for?	Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 – “National Preparedness” (2003) ⁵ 109 th Congress P.L. 109-417 The Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act ⁶
Who is doing the advocating?	Centers for Disease Control, American Red Cross, Dept. of Homeland Security, Dept. of Health and Human Services (Ready.Gov), Emergency Nurses Association.
Who is being lobbied?	Formal lobbying toward the passage of P.L. 109-417 is complete. Current efforts are now focused toward advocating for emergency preparedness at the individual household level.

Whom will this issue affect?	Individuals and family households at the local level
Were they or will they (in your opinion) be successful?	Success of the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act (P.L. 109-417), specifically the collaborative individual preparedness initiative “Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed,” is largely dependant upon proper marketing and advertising regarding the importance of emergency preparedness at the level of the individual community member. Community sponsored events during National Preparedness Month have helped to highlight the importance of such preparation; billboard advertising (See PowerPoint presentation) has also been helpful. However, informal polling of GSN and Med School students reveals the majority was unaware of National Preparedness Month. Furthermore, the preparation of an emergency kit and plan still appears to be the exception rather than the rule.
Why or Why not? What do they need to be more successful?	At present, the success of a national emergency preparedness initiative relies upon interested members within the community to visit sponsoring internet sites such as www.ready.gov or www.redcross.org to obtain information. A wider distribution of television and print media advertising is advisable to promote awareness and encourage action related to individual and community preparedness. Furthermore, primary care physicians and family nurse practitioners should understand and be aware of the issue and encourage household planning during office visits.
What are the consequences if they are not successful?	The fallout from Hurricane Katrina shows that in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, the initial burden for public health and safety lies squarely on the shoulders of individual community members. Failure of national advocacy initiatives to promote awareness and action toward emergency preparedness will strain the distribution of emergency supplies and services during future emergency events. Failure to prepare at the household level also has the potential to increase hospital surge-levels during events requiring a mass healthcare response.
If they are not successful, what other strategies can be used to achieve the same goal?	National initiatives toward preparedness advocacy have met with mixed success; more work is needed to communicate the “Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed” message. As noted earlier, advocacy must extend beyond internet advertising and resources to interested individuals. Sensible, sustained television and print public service messages would be effective in reaching a mass market and promote the goal of household preparedness in local communities.

How can physicians and / or nurses be involved in this advocacy issue?

Physicians and advanced practice nurses must first be aware of the importance of the emergency preparedness issue as an example of preventable disease and injury. Primary health care providers can help advocate for the issue by including preparedness questions into intake questionnaires. They should take every opportunity (e.g. “winter storm season”) to promote awareness and provide information related to emergency preparation. Physicians and nurses should promote readiness by participating in National Preparedness Month (September) activities, or volunteering for organizations such as the Worcester Regional Medical Reserve Corps (WRMRC). Finally, individual health care providers should lead by example by having a kit, making a plan, and staying informed of the potential for bio-terror, pandemic flu, and natural disasters within local communities.

1. http://www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0_79_.00.html
2. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/08/20070830-4.html>
3. <http://www.ready.gov/america/npm07/members.html>
4. <http://www.hhs.gov/asl/testify/2007/03/t20070309e.html>
5. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/assessments/hspd8.htm>
6. <http://www.opencrs.com/document/RL33589/2007-01-25%2000:00:00>