Understanding Emergency Preparedness within Health Centers: Foundational Principles, Financial Strategies, and Operational Continuity

Thursday March 20th, 2025

1:30-2:30pm Eastern / 10:30-11:30am Pacific

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We are a first-of-our-kind system of affiliates brought together by a common goal: To solve health inequity for the most underserved communities among us. Through primary care, education and policy, we've already bridged the gap for over 5 million people. And we're just getting started.

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MOSES/WEITZMAN Health System
Always groundbreaking. Always grounded.

Community Health Center, Inc.
A leading Federally Qualified Health Center based in Connecticut.

ConferMED
A national eConsult platform improving patient access to specialty care.

The Consortium for Advanced Practice Providers
A membership, education, advocacy, and accreditation organization for APP postgraduate training.

National Institute for Medical Assistant Advancement
An accredited educational institution that trains medical assistants for a career in team-based care environments.
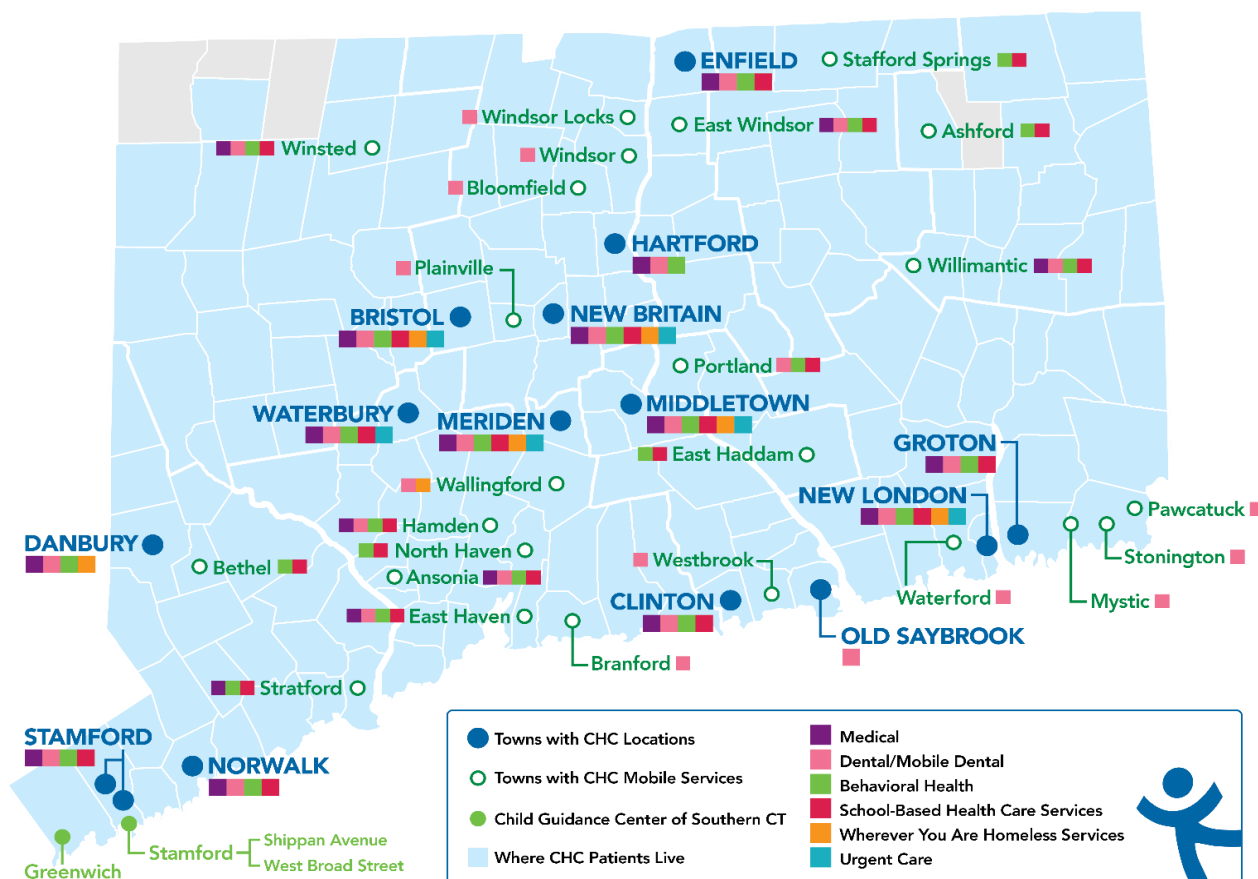
The Weitzman Institute
A center for innovative research, education, and policy.

Center for Key Populations
A health program with international reach, focused on the most vulnerable among us.

Locations & Service Sites

Map legend:
- Towns with CHC Locations
- Towns with CHC Mobile Services
- Child Guidance Center of Southern CT
- Where CHC Patients Live
- Medical
- Dental/Mobile Dental
- Behavioral Health
- School-Based Health Care Services
- Wherever You Are Homeless Services
- Urgent Care

THREE FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS

| 1 Clinical Excellence | 2 Research and Development | 3 Training the Next Generation |

Overview

- Founded: May 1, 1972
- Staff: 1,400
- Active Patients: 150,000
- Patients CY: 107,225
- SBHCs across CT: 152

Year	2021	2022	2023
Patients Seen	99,598	102,275	107,225

National Training and Technical Assistance Partners (NTTAP)
Clinical Workforce Development

Provides free training and technical assistance to health centers across the nation through national webinars, learning collaboratives, activity sessions, trainings, research, publications, etc.

To learn more, visit http://www.weitzmaninstitute.org\nca

Learning Objectives

- Gain knowledge on the foundations of emergency preparedness within health centers.

- Understand the national perspective and landscape on emergency preparedness, financial strategies, and operational continuity.

- Learn actionable steps for developing your health center's own Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) and Committee.

Speakers

- Matthew Griswold, Facilities Director, Community Health Center, Inc. (CHCI)

- Taina Lopez, Director of Emergency Management, National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)

- Jessica Hinshaw, Environmental Health Director, National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)

Foundations of Emergency Preparedness

Defining a Disaster

In the healthcare setting, a disaster is any emergency event which overwhelms or threatens to overwhelm the routine capabilities of the health center.

Emergencies in Health Center Context

Health centers are vulnerable to a wide range of emergencies that can disrupt normal operations and compromise patient care.

Natural Disasters

- Hurricanes
- Earthquakes
- Wildfires

Public Health Crises

- Pandemics
- Disease Outbreaks
- Biological Attack

Human-made Emergencies

- Power Outages
- Chemical Spills
- Acts of Violence

Infrastructure Failures

- Water Supply Interruption
- Gas or Electrical System Malfunction
- Building Structural Issues

What is Emergency Preparedness?

- Preparedness is defined as:

  "A continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in an effort to ensure effective coordination during incident response."

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2024, September 17). Plan and Prepare for Disasters. Retrieved from https://www.dhs.gov/plan-and-prepare-disasters

Principles of Emergency Management

Recovery: Activities that occur following a response to a disaster that are designed to help an organization and community return to a pre-disaster level of function.
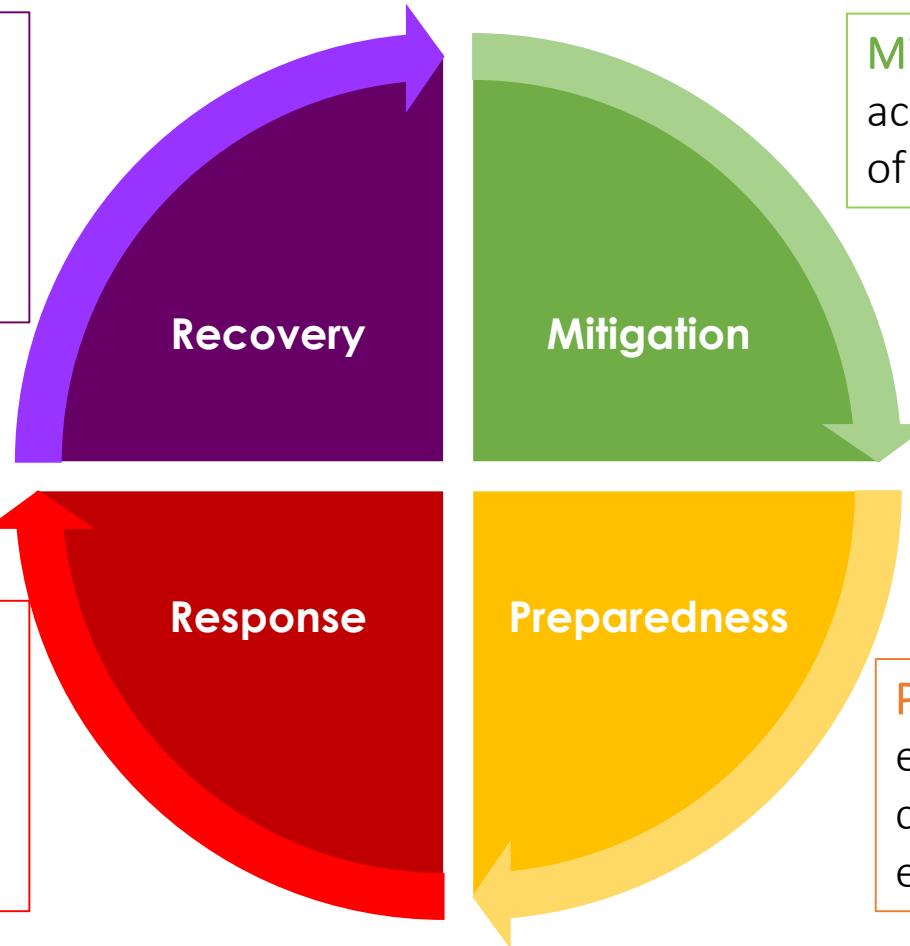
Mitigation: Pre-event planning and actions which aims to lessen the effects of potential disaster.

Response: Responding to emergencies involves taking immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs in the face of immediate and short-term effects.

Preparedness: Preparing ahead for emergencies by engaging with the community to ensure a thorough and effective response.

Recovery

Mitigation

Response

Preparedness

Key Reasons for Prioritizing Emergency Preparedness

➢Timely, coordinated reactions to various events

➢Site-specific plans based on roles, responsibilities, and training levels

➢Integration of external resources for comprehensive responses

➢Ensuring safety for patients, visitors, and staff during emergencies

➢Rapid restoration of essential services and property protection

➢Meeting requirements for a healthcare facility

Best Practices for Preparing for Emergencies

➢ Implementing regular training programs to ensure all staff are well-prepared for various emergency scenarios

➢ Conducting drills and simulations to practice emergency response procedures

➢ Maintaining an updated and comprehensive inventory of emergency supplies and resources

➢ Establishing clear communication protocols within the health center and with external partners

➢ Ensure compliance with accreditation standards, such as those set by the Joint Commission, Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) , and other relevant entities

Resources

- [Foundational Strategies for Emergency Preparedness within Health Centers Webinar](#)

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Courses
  - Please [click here](#) to register for valuable training opportunities, including free courses, and download certificates of completion.
  - The series of course trainings cater to all levels, from beginner to expert.

Health Center Risk for Natural Disasters

4,966 Permanent CHC sites* are in counties that have relatively high or very high risk rating (**35%**)
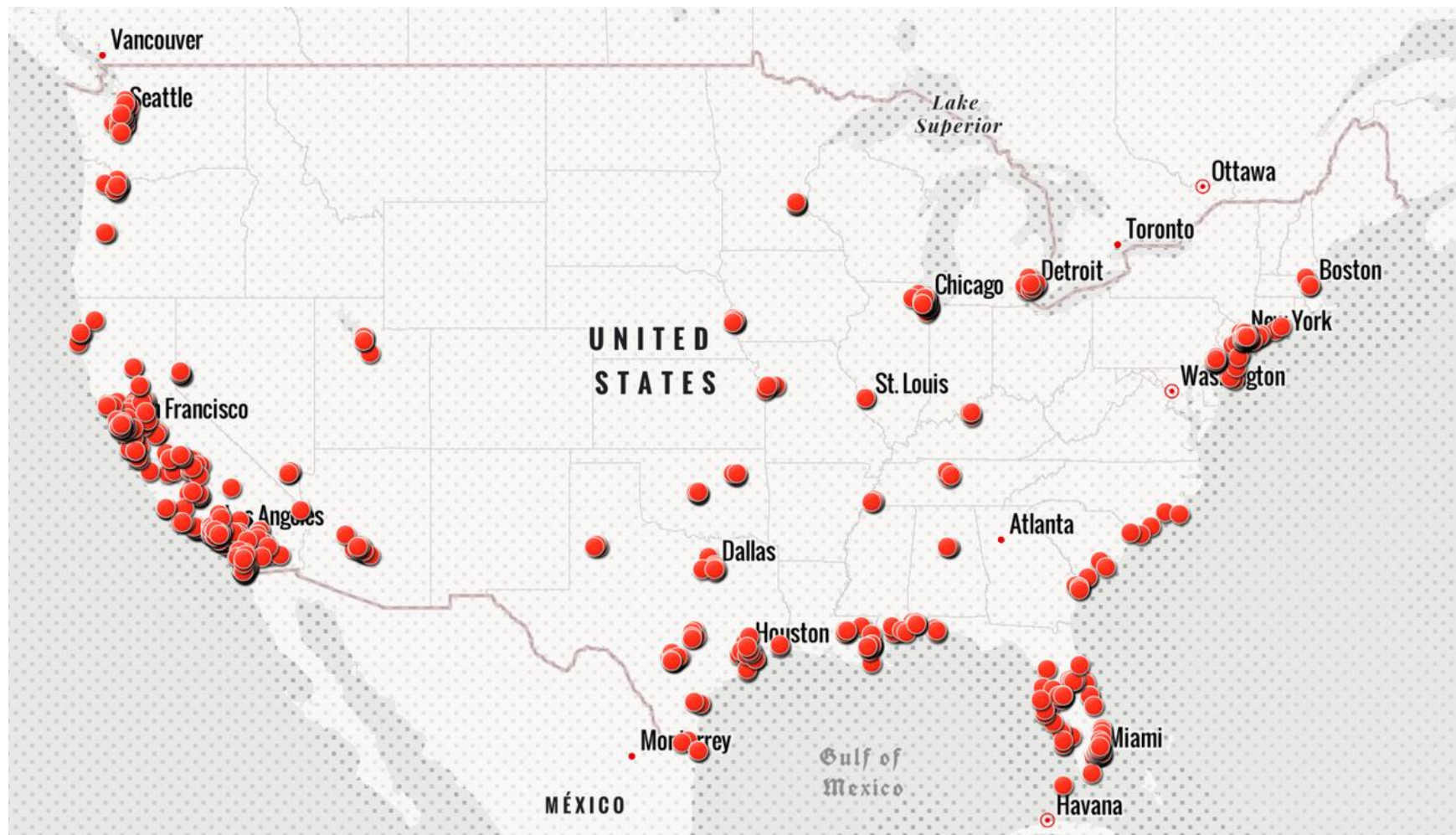
Total denominator all permanent sites + available data= 14,169
November 2024

Evolving Challenges in Emergency Management & Health Centers

Rising Financial
Burden of Disasters

Shifting Federal Emergency
Management Landscape

AltaMed medical center in Pasadena destroyed in Eaton Fire

Denise Florez   Jan 8, 2025 Updated Jan 8, 2025   💬 0
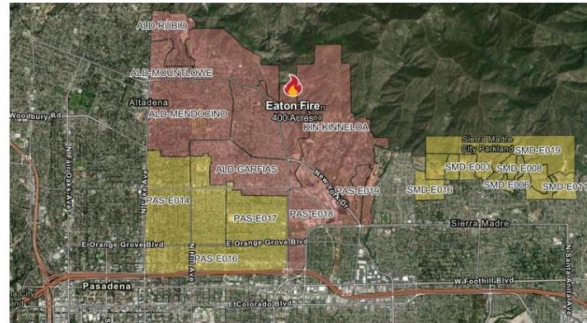
Map of Eaton fire. (CalFire)

AltaMed Health Services sent a text message to report that the Eaton Fire has destroyed its medical center located at 2661 E. Washington Blvd. in Pasadena.

Eastern Kentucky Health Centers Dig Out from Deadly Flooding

AUG 12, 2022 | By: Amy Simmons

friends at the Kentucky Primary Care Association (KPCA) recently met with NACHC staff they are experiencing after deadly floodwaters ravaged the communities in eastern Ke

Community Health Centers and Hurricane Helene

OCT 1, 2024 | By: Amy Simmons-Farber, Associate Vice President of Communications and Public Relations

Photo Courtesy of Cherokee Health Systems

Financial Impact of Disasters

On average Community Health Centers loose $50,000/day for each day they are offline

50% of business that sustain interruptions (at their primary site) for 1 week or more never recover

Evolving Challenges in Emergency Management & Health Centers
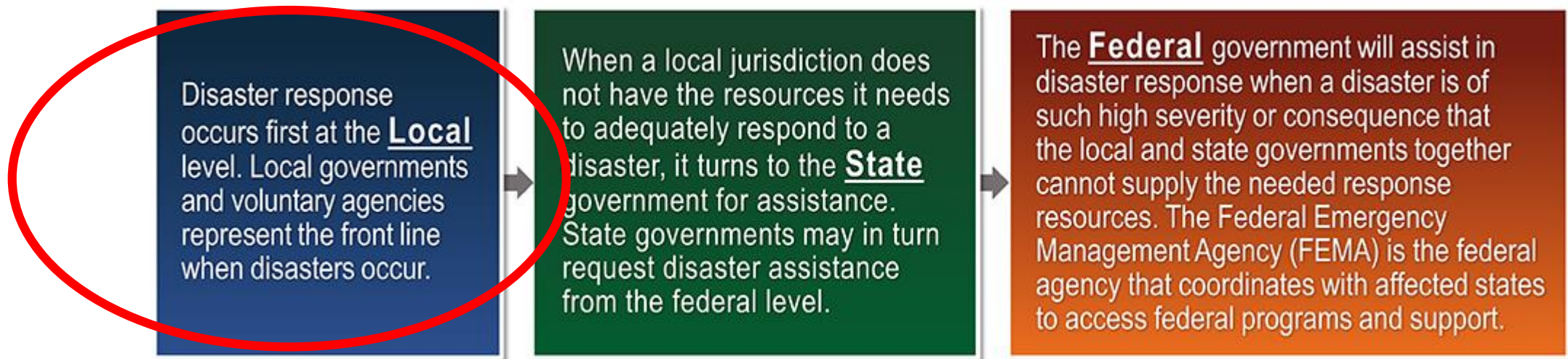
1. Consider Financial Loss in Risk Assessment
   - Financial Impact
   - Human Resources Impact
   - Document Inventory and Infrastructure (annually)

2. Establish Emergency Financial Reserves

3. Identify Grants & Disaster Relief Funding

4. Test Financial Preparedness- Exercise & Drill

Resources

- NACHC Business Continuity Interactive Learning Modules

- NACHC Business Continuity Manual

- Capital Link FEMA Funding for Damaged Facilities

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Shifting Federal Emergency Management Landscape

- Now is the time to build/strengthen local partnerships

Disaster response occurs first at the **Local** level. Local governments and voluntary agencies represent the front line when disasters occur.

When a local jurisdiction does not have the resources it needs to adequately respond to a disaster, it turns to the **State** government for assistance. State governments may in turn request disaster assistance from the federal level.

The **Federal** government will assist in disaster response when a disaster is of such high severity or consequence that the local and state governments together cannot supply the needed response resources. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the federal agency that coordinates with affected states to access federal programs and support.

Establish partnerships BEFORE disaster strikes! Conduct joint planning, exercises, and MOUs to strengthen community preparedness

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Essential Local Partners for CHCs:

Consider what works for your organization

- **Your PCA Emergency Management SME**

- **Emergency Management Agencies** – City/county emergency management offices

- **Public Health Departments** – Local health departments

- **Hospitals & Healthcare Coalitions** – Regional healthcare preparedness partners

- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** – Ambulance services and paramedics

- **Fire Departments & Law Enforcement** – Police, fire, and sheriff departments

- **Local Government Officials** – Mayors, county commissioners, and council members

- **Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)** – Food banks, shelters, and advocacy groups

- **Faith-Based Organizations** – Churches, mosques, synagogues, and religious networks

- **Utility Companies** – Water, electricity, gas, and telecommunications providers

- **Volunteer & Nonprofit Organizations** – American Red Cross, CERT teams, and other NGOs

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Examples Collaboration with Local Partners

- Close partnership with Emergency Management/ Healthcare Coalition
- Power Outage Plan
  - Includes Electric Company
  - Drill on plans and meet regularly
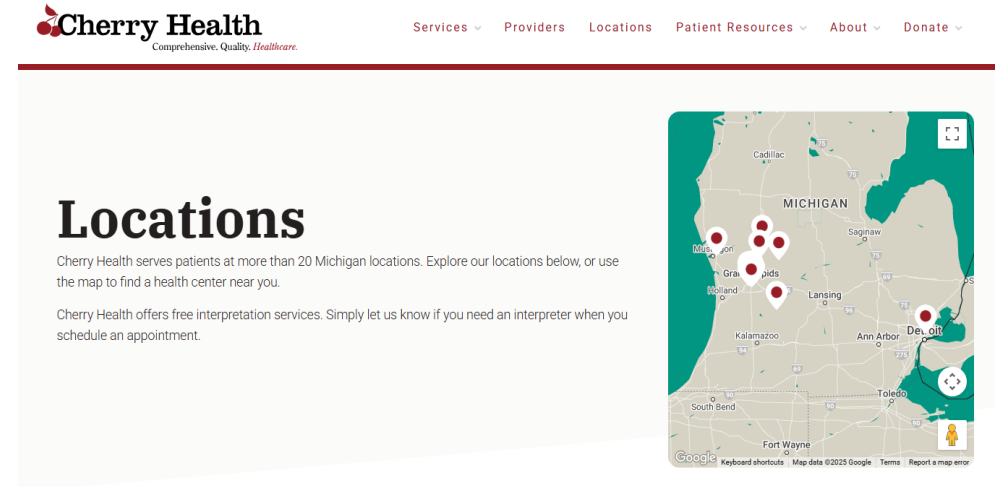
- Built partnership with local Health Department
- Able to collaborate with local health partners, State to mitigate patient influx when a local health facility closed abruptly

Financial, Operational and Community Preparedness

Financial Preparedness
- Reduce financial losses from closures and lost medications/vaccines
- Stabilize electricity bills

Operational Preparedness
- Continue patient care, even during power outages

Community Preparedness
- Support emergency response, when necessary and able
- Act as preparedness hubs
- Reduce Emergency Room surges

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Preparedness Hub Example

CrescentCare

- In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, New Orleans residents died from excessive heat, lack of oxygen or carbon monoxide poisoning

- Community Light House Initiative-network of nonprofit preparedness hubs, each powered by commercial-scale solar systems with backup battery capacity

CrescentCare
A Partnership for Life

TOGETHER
NEW ORLEANS

Direct Relief Announces $650,000 Grant to Build One of Nation's Largest Solar Resilience Hubs in New Orleans

CHARGE Program

Motivated by the urgent need to tackle the complex issues community health centers face, CHARGE partners support financial, operational, and community preparedness through design and installation of solar microgrids.*

*WHAT IS A MICROGRID?

Microgrids are a self-sufficient energy system that serves a discrete geographic footprint; this includes solar panels and battery storage.

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Additional Resources

- Interest Group (meets bi-monthly)

- PCA EMAC

- Learning Collaboratives/TTA
    - Heat
    - Air Quality
    - Emergency Management Competencies

    Email us!

    tlopez@nachc.org

    jhinshaw@nachc.org

THANK YOU !

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Community Health Centers ®

PLEASE VISIT US ONLINE   nachc.org

Developing an Emergency Preparedness Plan and Committee for Your Health Center

Developing Strategic Plans for Building Healthier Communities

Collaboration with Local Community Organizations:

- Engage with schools for health education workshops and emergency drills.
- Collaborate with food banks to establish emergency food distribution networks and provide nutritional education.
- Work with housing nonprofits to conduct home safety checks and install safety equipment.
- Involve faith-based groups in organizing vaccination drives and health screenings.

Participation in Community Health Initiatives:

- Partner with EMS to conduct community-wide health promotion campaigns and provide support for emergency medical services.

Establishment of Partnerships with Educational Institutions:

- Collaborate with schools and universities to integrate emergency preparedness education into curricula and provide resources for training.

Development of Tailored Strategies:

- Conduct community health assessments to identify specific needs.
- Customize emergency response plans to address prevalent health concerns and community needs.

Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP)

✓Safety plan for patients, staff, visitors

✓Roadmap for emergency management

✓Updated to reflect evolving threats

✓Developed with stakeholder input

✓Tested through regular drills

Components of an Effective Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP)

1. **Introduction** - Overview of the purpose and scope of the plan

2. **Plan Objectives** - Clear and concise statement of the plan's goals and intended outcomes

3. **All-Hazards Assessment** - Evaluation of potential threats, including natural, man-made, technological, terrorism, and wartime impacts

4. **Chain of Command (Incident Command)** - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for quick decision-making during emergencies

Components of an Effective Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP)

5. **Communication Protocols** - Comprehensive strategies for internal and external communication

6. **Resource Management** - Detailed procedures for the allocation and utilization of critical resources, including medical supplies, personnel, and technology

7. **Training and Drills** - Regular training programs and scenario-based drills to ensure preparedness and responsiveness

8. **Appendix** - Supplementary materials, contact information, and additional resources

EPP Table of Contents

Summary

Introduction

Mitigation

Preparedness

Response

Recovery

Appendices

Foundational EPP Review

Mitigation:	Preparedness:	Response:	Recovery:
• Conduct Hazard Vulnerability Analysis	• Form Emergency Preparedness Team • Develop basic Emergency Operations Plan • Gather resource materials	• Customize content for your Health Center • Provide Staff Training	• Implement basic communication strategies • Establish relationships with external partners • Commit to regular review and updates

Importance of Committees in Emergency Response

- Committees play a pivotal role in coordinating and executing effective and proactive emergency responses.

- Committees facilitate communication, decision-making, and resource allocation during emergencies.

- Committee members should bring together various expertise and perspectives to ensure a comprehensive approach to preparedness and response.

Quick Guide on Developing an Emergency Preparedness Committee

Identify key stakeholders, including representatives from various departments and community partners (HR, IT, risk management, community engagement)

→ Include participants who are passionate or experienced in the work

→ Encourage multiple perspectives within the committee to address the unique needs of all stakeholders.

→ Meet regularly to discuss:

- Training opportunities
- Grant funding
- Incidents
- Accreditation
- Check in with National Hurricane Center www.nhc.noaa.gov

Case Study: IT Outage Response

Executive Summary

- Around 9am reports of network slowness. The IT team responded and made some changes to improve connection and sustained for approx. 90 minutes. Then around 11:00AM, the agency experienced a <u>total</u> network outage. Phones, applications and computers were affected.

- Approximately 11:30-11:45am, some sites reported network was restored, but printers and other systems were reported to still be down but slowly had restored.

Objectives

- Objectives for the event were:
  - ➢ Establish communication with multiple sites
  - ➢ Confirm what applications are accessible
  - ➢ Providing schedules to all OM's

Observations

Strengths

- Bridgeline established and all key participants (roles) filled
  - ➢ Command staff, officer positions and section chiefs assigned with branch support roles as needed with IT as technical specialist.

Opportunities

- Impacted systems
- Downtime procedures
- Information sharing off network
- Schedules of network
- Contact lists

Outcomes

- Improved downtime procedure training and access.

- New bridgeline access

- Updated contact lists and made available through airwatch.

- Confirmed which apps and services are available without network.

Questions?

Wrap-Up

Activity Session Developing an Emergency Preparedness Plan for Health Centers: Planning, Risk Assessment and Response

- Join us for an interactive 60-minute session on crafting an Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) tailored to the unique needs of health centers. Expert faculty from CHCI will use best practices from national organizations, as well as their own health center, as a framework to provide coaching support and practical guidance. This session will highlight the Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) Tool as a critical first step, helping participants assess risks like severe weather, cybersecurity threats, and workplace violence. Using scenario-based learning, attendees will explore emergency planning phases, collaborate on customized strategies, and learn about FEMA training resources to further strengthen preparedness efforts.

- To register, click here!

Explore more resources!

National Learning Library:
Resources for Clinical Workforce Development

https://www.weitzmaninstitute.org/ncaresources

Health Center
Resource Clearinghouse

https://www.healthcenterinfo.org/

Contact Information

For information on future webinars, activity sessions, and learning collaboratives: please reach out to nca@chc1.com
or visit https://www.chc1.com/nca