

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY

Note to readers and users of the *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* Profiles: This *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* Profile is designed to provide background information leading to collective action and results. This profile is a product of the discussions of the Focus Area Strategic Team that was convened by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services during September 2009 through November 2010. The objectives from this Focus Area have been recognized as objectives of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*. (Refer to Section 4 of the *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* plan.) A complete list of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* Focus Area Strategic Team Members can be found in Appendix A of the plan.

Definition

Emergency preparedness, response and recovery means the provision of funding and staff resources to support and assist local public health departments, tribes, other public health and health care partners and state agencies with planning, training, and exercising in order to effectively respond to public health emergencies and assure readiness. Effective emergency response also includes addressing the variety of special-needs populations who include, but are not limited to, people with disabilities such as deafness, blindness, or mobility impairments; frail elders; limited or non-English speaking people; and people with low literacy skills.

Importance of the Focus Area

Life in Wisconsin includes coping with weather-related emergencies such as tornadoes, flooding, extreme temperatures, or heavy snowfall; health-related emergencies such as the recent H1N1 influenza outbreak; and the ever-present threat of bioterrorism. Planning for such emergencies must be led by federal, state, and local governmental agencies in partnership with other public, private, nonprofit, and civic sectors. While many emergencies are unpredictable, steps can be taken to align policies and systems designed to protect the health and safety of individuals, families, and communities throughout Wisconsin.

Emergency preparedness covers many areas, from planning for response to natural and man-made events, to planning for disease outbreaks, such as pandemic influenza. Planning requires careful consideration of external factors and the needs of special population groups. In addition, it is important to carry out various levels of drills and exercises to help communities prepare for, and respond to, a host of emergencies. Web-based systems have been developed and are used for volunteer management, emergency communications, and training of the emergency preparedness, response, and recovery workforce.

Public health and hospital preparedness systems have made Wisconsin more prepared than it has ever been before. Public health and hospital preparedness programs support and enhance the capacity of the state, local public health departments and tribes, and the health care system to prepare for public health threats and emergencies through planning, exercising, training, and responding. While many planners and responders dedicate their efforts to better prepare for emergencies, preparedness needs to be a joint effort.

Since 2001, preparedness has matured and expanded from predominantly a government function to increased emphasis on other public and private sector partners. Future efforts in this area must include a broader range of partners and reach additional sectors of the population, including at-risk populations. As this expansion occurs, adequate dedicated and sustainable funding must be established at the state level to assure Wisconsin's success in protecting the health and safety of the public over the next decade. Through collaboration of government-based efforts and individual responsibility, we can all be better prepared for unexpected events.

While many of the *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* goals and capabilities are directly related to communicable disease prevention and control, emergency preparedness also includes protection of the basic human hierarchy of needs. The more sustainable a community can make its water, air, food and shelter, the more time and resources the community will have to focus on higher-level needs such as social relationships, economic issues, and education. To be most effective, emergency preparedness must build into other planning and programs at the community and individual levels.

Wisconsin Data Highlights

- Twenty-seven states, including Wisconsin, cut funding for public health from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2009 (Trust for America's Health, 2009).
- The Public Health and Hospital Preparedness programs at the Wisconsin Division of Public Health are funded by federal grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, and receive no direct state funding.
- Federal funding for public health emergency preparedness and hospital preparedness has declined 27 percent since fiscal year 2005 when adjusted for inflation. While additional funding has been provided to respond to emergencies, this is less effective than ongoing support for preparedness (Trust for America's Health, 2009).
- Despite a federal mandate, the U.S. continues to lack an integrated, national approach to biosurveillance that is capable of responding to catastrophic health threats or to more familiar problems such as the contamination of food supplies (Trust for America's Health, 2009).
- Wisconsin has successfully established capacity to coordinate efforts in preparedness planning, assessing, training, exercising, communicating, and responding to multi-jurisdictional events (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2009).

- Disaster preparedness and emergency response systems are typically designed for people without disabilities, for whom escape or rescue involves walking, running, driving, seeing, hearing, and quickly responding to instructions, alerts, and evacuation announcements (Frieden, 2005).
- People with disabilities frequently encounter barriers in shelters and recovery centers, and in other facilities used in connection with disaster operations such as first-aid stations, mass feeding areas, portable payphone stations, portable toilets, and temporary housing (Frieden, 2005).
- Access to emergency public warnings, as well as preparedness and mitigation information and materials, does not adequately include people who cannot depend on sight and hearing to receive their information (Frieden, 2005).

Objective 1

By 2020, strengthen emergency preparedness, response, and recovery through integration into existing organizations and programs; and collaboration and coordination between partners.

Objective 1 Indicators

- Periodic state and federal reports that evaluate state progress, including the *Preparedness Legislative Report on Wisconsin Homeland Security*; State of Wisconsin Preparedness Report; *Public Health Preparedness: Strengthening CDC's Emergency Response – A CDC Report on Terrorism Preparedness and Emergency Response (TPER) Funded Activities*.
- Wisconsin's state ranking in Trust for America's Health annual *Ready or Not* report.

Objective 1 Rationale

Emergency preparedness must be sufficiently funded and integrated across many sectors in the outer ring of the *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* framework. These activities must not be addressed in a silo in order to save lives and prevent economic and social disruption.

Objective 2

By 2020, strengthen emergency preparedness, response, and recovery through individual and community empowerment, outreach and engagement to all sectors, particularly at-risk populations.

Objective 2 Indicator

Proportion of households by population group with emergency and communication plans (Wisconsin Emergency Management Survey).

Objective 2 Rationale

Emergency preparedness is a social responsibility. It is important for individuals and families to be knowledgeable and ready in order to create a culture of preparedness. Communities must be given the necessary tools, trainings, and support in order to achieve an adequate readiness level to protect health and safety. Preparedness is personal, and the

more ready families and individuals are, the better their community will be able to respond and recover.

Potential evidence- or science-based actions to move the focus area objectives forward over the decade

- Conduct field research studies to gather systematically collected data to help planners avoid common disaster management pitfalls and improve disaster response planning and recovery (Auf der Heide, 2006).
- Expand the use of Community Emergency Response Teams in Wisconsin. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program helps train people to be better prepared to respond to emergency situations in their communities. When emergencies happen, CERT members can give critical support to first responders, provide immediate assistance to victims, and organize spontaneous volunteers at a disaster site. CERT members can also help with non-emergency projects that help improve the safety of the community.
- Assure that Wisconsin families are prepared to respond efficiently to emergency situations.
- Increase public awareness of individual responsibility in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. When disaster strikes, immediate help may not be available.
 - Households should have an emergency kit with enough supplies to last three days following a natural disaster, health or man-made emergency.
 - Families should have an emergency plan that has been discussed with family, friends, and neighbors.
 - Households should have at least one battery-operated radio in case there is a power failure.
 - Families should make certain vaccinations are up-to-date, including vaccinations against pneumonia for older family members.
 - In an emergency, don't immediately leave home if there is an emergency. Sometimes it is safer to stay indoors. Listen to the radio or television for instructions.
 - Neighbors should be aware of other neighbors, friends, or relatives who may need help during an emergency. Know whom to notify to assist them.
 - Store emergency supplies such as food, water, pet supplies, and medicines in your home.

References

Report on Wisconsin Homeland Security; State of Wisconsin Preparedness Report; Public Health Preparedness: Strengthening CDC's Emergency Response – A CDC Report on Terrorism Preparedness and Emergency Response (TPER) Funded Activities.

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