

CENTER SPOTLIGHT

A quarterly newsletter highlighting NCCPHP activities and accomplishments



July – September 2009

The North Carolina Center for Public Health Preparedness (NCCPHP) and the North Carolina Division of Public Health (NCDPH) are working together on several projects pertaining to the influenza pandemic. NCCPHP and NCDPH received a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation quick-strike grant to carry out a population-based survey to determine residents' intent to receive novel influenza A (H1N1) vaccine, isolation and social distancing plans, and the origin of influenza health information in 2 North Carolina counties. The study findings are being used by state planners involved in both the seasonal and pandemic influenza vaccination campaigns. In addition, NCCPHP received a contract from NCDPH to provide technical assistance to local health departments in North Carolina as they begin the process of revising their pandemic influenza preparedness plans. We are currently scaling up our capacity to provide statewide assistance and look forward to visiting local health departments this fall.

---Pia MacDonald, NCCPHP Director

Technical Assistance to North Carolina

Team Epi-Aid (SPH student volunteers assisting with urgent public health response)

UNC's student public health surge capacity volunteer group, Team Epi-Aid, kicked off a new school year with a group orientation and information session. Quickly thereafter, student volunteers assisted NCCPHP staff and NCDPH partners with conducting surveys in Orange and Alamance counties concerning community attitudes about influenza vaccination. In September, 2 student volunteers assisted NCCPHP staff and local public health partners with a reproductive health needs assessment in Wilson County, North Carolina. Students identified pregnant or post-partum women visiting a clinic at the local health department and surveyed them about access to reproductive health services following severe tornadoes in the area earlier this summer.

North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System

North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NC EDSS) project staff continue to travel the state training local health department staff on use of the Electronic Disease Surveillance System. NCCPHP staff held 3 general communicable diseases trainings with 28 participants from 17 counties. NCCPHP also held 1 training session on using NC EDSS to report cases of tuberculosis (TB) with 7 participants, and conducted a pilot test of a new online TB module. The first cohort began taking the online TB module on September 28.

Publications

Horney, JA. Evaluation of the Certificate in Community Preparedness and Disaster Management Program at the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Public Health. *Public Health Rep.* 2009;124(4):610-616.

Presentations

Horney, J. Factors associated with risk of evacuation failure from Hurricane Isabel in NC, 2003. Presentation at the 34th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop; July 15-18, 2009; Broomfield, CO.

Rosselli, R, Davis M, Alexander L, Casani J. Emergency planning for at-risk populations: A toolkit for local planners. National Association of County and City Health Officials 2009 Annual Conference; July 29-31, 2009; Orlando, FL.

In the News

UNC researchers receive grant to protect NC food supply, advance homeland security. *ASPH Friday Letter.* Association of Schools of Public Health. August 14, 2009.

Research explores why residents don't evacuate for hurricanes. *Impact: a quarterly newsletter.* The North Carolina Institute for Public Health. September 2009.

Emergency Planning for At-Risk Groups: A Toolkit for Local Health Departments

The toolkit of resources for local health department planners is now available at <http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/at-riskplanning/>. The toolkit features 5 topic areas pertaining to emergency planning for at-risk populations, including identification, education, and the provision of services. Work was completed on the toolkit in the last quarter, following a thorough review by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Disaster Planning Group, and an official launch via video streaming at the annual Preparedness Coordinator and Public Health Regional Surveillance Team meeting. More than 100 people accessed the video meeting.

Research

North Carolina Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center (NCPERRC)

The North Carolina Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center celebrated its first birthday at the NCPERRC Synergy & Translation Committee meeting in Chapel Hill on September 28. Also celebrated at the meeting was the outstanding success of the 5 research projects currently underway. Ninety-eight percent of health departments in North Carolina have participated in NCPERRC research this year, and at least 150 different individuals have been involved. NCPERRC staff are thrilled with this success, and credit North Carolina for its commitment to improving health through research. More information on specific projects and the latest NCPERRC Newsletter are available on the NCPERRC Web site (<http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/ncperrc/>).

Assessment of Reproductive Health Needs After Disasters

Several projects pertaining to reproductive health were completed this quarter. In July, NCCPHP staff traveled to Leon, Nicaragua, to assist with the deployment of a reproductive health needs assessment survey created by NCCPHP and partners at the CDC. The needs assessment survey was then modified for use in a “watering-hole” sample in North Carolina. In September, NCCPHP and partners from several local health departments traveled to Wilson, NC, and surveyed pregnant and post-partum women at Wilson County Health Department’s WIC clinic. Participants completed surveys on one of several kiosk-style computers and provided information about their reproductive health needs before and after a severe tornado struck the area earlier this summer. Approximately 40 participants completed the brief survey over 3 days. Data from this survey and a similar reproductive health needs assessment conducted in March will be evaluated to determine the most effective sampling methods for use following disasters.

Surveying Community Attitudes Towards Influenza Vaccination

This quarter, NCCPHP, in collaboration with NCDPH, received a quick-strike grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to carry out a population-based survey to examine community attitudes towards novel influenza A (H1N1) vaccination. After developing a survey, NCCPHP staff joined student volunteers from Team Epi-Aid, NCDPH staff, and health department staff

In the News

New toolkit assists local health departments in planning for at-risk groups. *Impact: a quarterly newsletter.* The North Carolina Institute for Public Health. September 2009.

2009 H1N1 influenza outbreak update. *Impact: a quarterly newsletter.* The North Carolina Institute for Public Health. September 2009.

Field Epidemiology Certificate honors its 100th graduate. *Impact: a quarterly newsletter.* The North Carolina Institute for Public Health. September 2009.

UNC certificate program graduates 500 students in first decade. *ASPH Friday Letter.* Association of Schools of Public Health. September 18, 2009.

from Orange and Alamance counties to conduct 207 interviews. The data collected included knowledge about influenza and the seasonal and pandemic vaccines, attitudes towards vaccination, and a discussion of sources used for health information. The project was completed in an expedited timeline to assist with the state's vaccine campaigns this fall. Also look for the report on the survey coming soon in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

NC FOODSAFE Project

NCCPHP and colleagues from the Center for Logistics and Digital Strategy (in the Kenan-Flagler Business School) began work on the NCFOODSAFE project being supported by an award from the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions. The project focuses on the development of new informatics tools for reducing latency in both the surveillance and response hemispheres of the food safety system in North Carolina.

Training & Educational Programs

Training Web Site

One new training was added to the NCCPHP Training Web Site this quarter, bringing the number of trainings to 174. There were 2,044 new users this quarter, bringing the total number of users to 35,853. There were 5,252 new course completions, for 73,062 total course completions from individuals in 149 countries. Visit the NCCPHP Training Web Site at <http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/training/>.

FOCUS on Field Epidemiology

One issue of *FOCUS on Field Epidemiology* is newly available in Spanish: Volume 5, Issue 1: Niveles de bioseguridad en el Laboratorio (Laboratory Biosafety Levels). View all issues of *FOCUS* in Español at: http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/focus/index_esp.htm.

Field Epidemiology Training Program for Central America

NCCPHP has continued developing the master's level curriculum in field epidemiology for national and regional public health professionals in Guatemala and Central America as part of the Central America Field Epidemiology Training Program. In July, NCCPHP staff attended a pilot test of the Tutor's Curriculum in Guatemala. Two modules of the Tutor's curriculum were pilot-tested with 6 participants. Since then, work has continued on those and the other 7 modules of the training. In addition, NCCPHP submitted the final draft of the basic level modules 1-3 to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for review in September.

North Carolina Preparedness Coordinators Online Course

The second official session of the Preparedness Coordinators Online Course kicked off in September with 20 participants from approximately 15 counties in North Carolina. The course pairs newer preparedness coordinators with more experienced mentors, and covers topics related to preparedness

coordination such as planning, working with partners, planning exercises, and communication. The course is led by nurses from the North Carolina Public Health Regional Surveillance Teams with support from NCCPHP.

Sentinel Surveillance for Influenza-Like-Illness

In September, NCCPHP staff traveled to St. Petersburg, Russia with colleagues from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe for a train-the-trainer conference on sentinel surveillance for influenza-like-illness. CDC and WHO staff working in Europe attended the conference, where they participated in breakout groups in virology and epidemiology.

Disaster Response Network (DRN) Training Project

The Disaster Response Network Training is an 8-module training program intended to provide an overview of disaster response in North Carolina. Modules cover topics including types and phases of disasters, mental health interventions, self-care for responders, and ethical issues in disaster response. This quarter, NCCPHP staff continued work customizing several North Carolina-specific modules of the DRN training for use by partners including the states of Georgia and Massachusetts and the province of British Columbia. The DRN training series is available through the NCCPHP Web Site (<http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/training/>).

Work with Partner States

Illinois

In July, NCCPHP staff traveled to Illinois to facilitate the “Legal Authority During a Public Health Disaster” workshop at the Illinois Public Health Emergency Preparedness Summit. This is the third time NCCPHP has participated in this conference.

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