

Engaging Community Partners in Preparedness Planning

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START 

Working Group on Civic Engagement in Health Emergency Planning – Overview

- **Problem** – Does volunteerism plus stockpiled basements equal citizen preparedness?
- **Process** – What do scholarly research and practical experience today suggest?
- **5 Principal Findings:**
 - Extreme events compel citizen action & judgment
 - Civic infrastructure yields remedies at all stages of disasters
 - Communication, consultation, & community engagement (CE) are tools for leaders to mobilize civic infrastructure
 - Decision makers gain wisdom & influence thru CE
 - Certain ingredients are necessary for genuine CE

WG Process

- Interdisciplinary body w/ breadth of knowledge & experience
- Review of relevant literatures
 - Social rsch into hazards, disasters, epidemics
 - Public participation theory & practice
 - Medical/public health emergency management
- Group deliberation of evidence & advice
 - May '06 Summit: *Disease, Disaster, & Democracy*
 - July & Nov '06 meetings; iterative drafts & review

WG Members (e.g.)

- CDC Coordinating Ofc for Terrorism Preparedness & Emergency Response
- Center for Minority Health, Univ of Pittsburgh (PA)
- City Manager's Office, Berkeley (CA)
- Disaster Interfaith Services (NYC)
- Grand Bayou Families United (LA)
- James Lee Witt Associates (DC)
- Montgomery County Health Dept (MD)
- Natural Hazards Center (CO)
- Seattle & King County Public Health (WA)
- Tulsa Partners, Project Impact, & Citizen Corps (OK)

1. Disasters & Epidemics Compel Citizen Judgment and Action

- **Shock-producing damages** – ruptured expectations about physical survival, social order, meaning of life
- **Response system overload** – high-volume &/or widely dispersed demands; functional disabilities
- **Improvised solutions** – unforeseen situations demand creative problem solving & break w/ routine
- **Disproportionate impacts** – chances for greater victimization are unevenly distributed in society
- **History-in-the-making** – political after effects, transformed social expectations, indelible memories

2. Civic Infrastructure (CI) Yields Remedies thru out Disaster Cycle

- **Communications network** w/ trusted channels that reach dispersed, diverse, & wary populations
- **Collective wisdom** to help set priorities & inform values-laden decisions
- **Local knowledge** to improve reliability & acceptability of disaster plans
- **Support for responders** during response & recovery
- **Self-organized, innovative solutions** for unforeseen circumstances
- **Rooted-ness in place** the personalizes communitywide recovery & amasses resilience

3. Leaders' Tools to Tap Civic Infrastructure Are Unevenly Applied

- Communication
 - Typically one-way w/ intent of educating & informing public
 - Pamphlets, press releases, public meetings, websites like *ready.gov*
- Consultation
 - Solicitation of opinions thru surveys, polls, focus groups, advisory panel
 - Citizen input can inform policy decision & implementation, but is one factor among many
- Community Engagement
 - Structured dialogue, joint problem solving, & collaborative action among formal authorities, citizens at-large, & local opinion leaders

4. Decision Makers Gain Wisdom & Influence thru Community Partners

- Greater ability to govern & maintain trust during a crisis
- More citizen responders who ease burdens on health & safety agencies
- Fiscal probity thru less disaster-related losses & expenditures, more tax revenue
- Feasible emergency plans that reflect collective values & judgments
- Constituents interested in success of public health/safety & emergency mgmt agencies

5. Certain Ingredients Are Necessary for Genuine CE

- Commit the administration; identify agency champion(s)
- Assess civic infrastructure; build on prior foundations
- Define top issues with community partners
- Allocate sufficient resources to sustain CE
- Reach out to groups typically absent from policy-making table
- Listen to unresolved trauma & grief from past

WG Materials Available On-Line

www.upmc-biosecurity.org

- May '06 - Disease, Disaster, & Democracy: The Public's Stake in Health Emergency Planning (summit proceedings)
- Mar '07 - Community Engagement: Leadership Tool for Catastrophic Event (consensus report)
- May '07 - How to Work with Community Partners to Prepare for Health Emergencies (leadership handbook)

Thank you.

