

PA DOH/HAP Healthcare Coalition Preparedness Project

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) is the lead agency for coordinating the response to the public health and medical consequences of a disaster in Pennsylvania. Healthcare facilities and systems across the commonwealth are an essential component of any public health and medical response.

Over the past several years, many healthcare facilities have significantly improved their ability to respond to the medical needs of citizens during a disaster. In addition, the Regional Task Force (RTF) Health and Medical Subcommittees have developed regional medical surge response capabilities, with the support of partners including emergency medical service personnel and emergency management coordinators. Additional preparedness actions are necessary to sustain these accomplishments and increase overall healthcare preparedness capabilities.

Therefore, the PA DOH is partnering with the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) to support and enhance healthcare preparedness and response efforts across the commonwealth. HAP's existing relationships and experience give them extensive knowledge and expertise on how healthcare facilities and systems operate.

The purpose of this project with HAP is to build, enhance, and test regional healthcare facility emergency operations plans in order to leverage a regional response to emergencies in Pennsylvania. This project will enhance healthcare facilities and systems' ability to provide the best possible care to all Pennsylvanians during medical emergencies.

Project Overview

- The HAP partnership will help build, enhance and test regional and individual healthcare facility emergency preparedness and response plans and activities.
- Six HAP regional managers and one project director are staffing the project. The staff will be located throughout the commonwealth. Regional healthcare facility coordination will align with the Regional Task Force geographical boundaries and the Health and Medical Subcommittee infrastructure.
- HAP project staff will work with hospitals, long-term care facilities, Federally Qualified Health Centers, ambulatory surgery centers, and other healthcare facilities to enhance emergency preparedness and response planning and activities based on priorities set by the PA DOH and prescribed by federal guidance.
- HAP project staff will also work closely with the PA DOH, the EMS Councils, the RTF Health and Medical Subcommittees and other partners on regional preparedness and response planning.

- Examples of tasks the HAP project staff will be working on include:
 - Assisting with healthcare facility all-hazards emergency operations planning.
 - Assisting with the development of regional healthcare hazard vulnerability assessments.
 - Assisting with the development and implementation of healthcare facility and regional training and exercises.
 - Participating in RTF Health and Medical Subcommittee meetings to assist healthcare facilities with their roles and responsibilities in regional planning and response activities.
 - Assisting with the ongoing development of comprehensive regional medical surge plans based on the Pennsylvania Modular Emergency Medical System (PA-MEMS).
 - Assisting with the development and enhancement of regional Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between healthcare facilities within a region, as well as cross-regional MOUs.
 - Supporting the implementation of a web-based system for coordinating public health and medical situational awareness and resources during an emergency.
 - Providing staff support, as needed, to Emergency Support Function #8 operations in local, regional or state Emergency Operations Centers.

For additional information or for any questions about this project, please contact Melissa Robbins, Healthcare and Regional Coalition Preparedness Coordinator, at (717) 346-0640, or melirobbin@pa.gov.

Federal Guidance

In March 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published the *Public Health Preparedness Capabilities: National Standards for State and Local Planning* which define public health preparedness capabilities and establish national standards. Similarly, in January 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, published the *Healthcare Preparedness Capabilities: National Guidance for Healthcare System Preparedness* which define healthcare preparedness capabilities and establish national standards. Together, these documents serve as resources for public health and healthcare preparedness programs throughout the nation.