



JCDHE Public Health Preparedness Program

Planning and Preparing for Potential Public Health Emergencies



The anthrax events of 2001, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the ever-increasing threat of an influenza pandemic have established that public health systems must be prepared to take a lead role when responding to all types of health threats. Responding to and directing resources in order to protect the health of all citizens during a public health emergency has become another 'job' placed upon the public health system. Jefferson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) with funding from the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, has created a team for all hazards public health emergency preparedness. The Emergency Preparedness (EP) team consists of a coordinator-Lyle Moore, planner-Kari Arvais and epidemiologist-Susan Moyer.

A primary goal of the JCDHE Emergency Preparedness team is to better prepare JCDHE to respond to any public health emergency, especially those requiring mass prophylaxis or the implementation of quarantine and isolation. Acquiring, distribution and dispensing antibiotics or vaccines to the public is a lead role public health departments will take in an emergency. Emergency response has quick timelines to help ensure the safety of the

public. For example in the case of a smallpox bioterrorism event, all 535,000 residents of Jefferson County would need medicines within 48 hours. Obviously, a huge task, however with intense collaboration and planning, potentially possible.

JCDHE's Emergency Preparedness team is building relationships and working with traditional emergency responders and community partners to improve response time. Quick and efficient response requires knowing emergency responders and contacts as well as understanding other agency emergency operations long before an emergency occurs. The JCDHE Emergency Preparedness team, along with other Denver

providing emergency intervention services, both direct and indirect, to the approximately 2.7 million citizens of the North Central Region. These agencies are committed to a regional approach for public health emergency preparedness. These agencies may also be called upon to provide assistance to organized health departments and nursing services throughout the state by existing mutual aid agreements.

In addition to enhancing JCDHE's collaboration with traditional emergency response agencies, JCDHE is improving its mass prophylaxis capabilities. Mass prophylaxis is the administration of critical interventions or medications

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in order to protect the health of the population. The mass prophylaxis function of a emergency preparedness is one of the most complex and resource-consuming of all functions. A mass antibiotic-dispensing campaign may employ

Metro public health entities, participates in a collaborative effort with a number of organizations and regional partners to enhance preparedness efforts for the Denver metro area. The Federal Department of Health and Human Services created the Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI). Under the CRI, Jefferson County participates in the North Central Region of the Colorado All Hazards Emergency Management Regions. This initiative tasks the metro area public health departments and nursing services with

several methods of dispensing depending on the nature, size and scope of the incident. Obviously, inadequate planning for mass prophylaxis could result in an increase of lives lost and significant public unrest.

JCDHE is preparing to provide mass prophylaxis by establishing mutual aid agreements with local municipalities for Points of Dispensing (POD) and creating strategically placed stockpiles

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Local Health Response:

- Implementing voluntary or court-ordered isolation or quarantine
- Acquiring, distributing and dispensing antiviral medications and vaccines when they become available through mass clinics.
- Coordinating regional public health and medical efforts (Jefferson, Clear Creek, Gilpin Counties)
- Public Information, Education and Risk Communication

Planning, Preparing, Protecting

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of resources. JCDHE has also chosen POD sites, developed POD flow plans and conducted a mass prophylaxis exercise using influenza vaccine. In the event of a public health emergency residents will be directed to these Points of Dispensing sites. Until that time, the site locations are confidential for security reasons.

Another important response to a public health emergency could involve quarantine and/or isolation. These are social distancing tools for disease control and prevention. Quarantine is designed to separate and restrict movement of someone who, while not yet ill or showing symptoms, may have been exposed to a communicable disease and therefore may become infectious. Isolation is used for those who are already showing signs and symptoms of a specific communicable disease and must be isolated from the public to prevent further spread of disease. Quarantine and isolation are effective public health tools used to break the chain of infection.

Identification, tracking and providing resources for those quarantined and/or isolated is another key response activity. In 2005, quarantine and isolation orders, a statutory responsibility of JCDHE, were prepared, reviewed and approved by legal authorities within Jefferson County.

Another key aspect to effective response in a public health emergency is providing accurate, timely and relevant information to all involved including, the general public, healthcare providers and first responders. Public information, pre, during, and post event is key to reducing public fear and panic and to increasing individuals' adherence to public health precautions or directives. JCDHE has significantly increased the number of physicians, veterinarians, first responders, etc. who receive health alerts via the state Health Alert Network (HAN) as well as those receiving JCDHE news releases and community health information. In addition, the Colorado Department of



The JCDHE Emergency Preparedness Team from left Susan, Lyle and Kari

Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) partners with the Rocky Mountain Poison Center to provide consistent up-to-date information to the public on such topics as anthrax, avian flu, hantavirus, influenza/

newsletters, employee trainings and interviews as well as the JCDHE web site: <http://health.jeffco.us>.

Finally, continuous disease surveillance and monitoring of the health of the community are crucial to detecting an emerging epidemic or identifying an outbreak in progress. Disease surveillance and rapid analysis of epidemiologic information is a key responsibility of public health in the nation. The emergency preparedness program works in conjunction with the Communicable Disease Control Program to monitor reportable diseases in the County and ensure epidemiologic capacity. In addition to existing surveillance tools, such as disease

reporting systems, sentinel physicians, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting, the emergency preparedness team uses existing federal programs such as Biowatch and Biosense for surveillance of potential pathogens that terrorists might

use. Collaborations with the school district, local hospital and major insurance providers also aid in disease surveillance.

The JCDHE Emergency Preparedness team continues to prepare for any potential public health emergency. Planning, training and collaborating are essential for effective response and protecting the health of the citizens we serve.

COHELP
1-877-462-2911
Colorado Health Emergency Line for the Public
JCDHE
<http://health.jeffco.us>

pneumonia, tuberculosis, ricin, SARS, mold, plague and other health threats. COHELP's phone number is 1-877-462-2911.

Partner and community information about emergency preparedness and current public health threats is an essential and ongoing process. JCDHE's emergency response team continues to speak at meetings, conferences, and classrooms. Information is being disseminated through formal and in-formal presentations,

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