

# KEEPING YOUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH SAFE:

## A HEALTH SECURITY ACTIVITY GUIDE



Learn how public health can help improve the health security and resilience of your community!



**ASPR**  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR  
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Building National Health Security means building a stronger nation, one where the health of all people is protected in the face of a disaster event. Whether they know it or not, everyone has some connection to our nation's health security. From those working in fields directly related to health or preparedness to those volunteering within a community at neighborhood events--everyone has a role to play. In working to build new relationships between people and new partnerships between organizations, we can all impact positive change to make our country a healthier, more resilient one.

## THE ROLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN NATIONAL HEALTH SECURITY

Many people turn to public health professionals, agencies and organizations for information and resources on threats to their community's health and ways to stay safe. As public health professionals, you work collaboratively with a diverse network to address public health challenges, to mobilize community partners, to serve as a link to health care services, and to keep communities safe.

This was the case during the 2014 domestic Ebola response, as public health practitioners across the country prepared for potential cases in their region of the United States. National and international focus surrounding Ebola reinforced the understanding that even incidents beginning internationally can have health consequences locally. As such, public health plays a critical role in achieving national health security—a state in which the nation and its people are prepared for, protected from, and resilient in the face of incidents with health consequences.

## WHAT IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

According to the recent preparedness profile survey from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), 47 percent of local health departments reported an awareness of ASPR's National Health Security Strategy (NHSS). By increasing awareness of what



national health security means, health departments across the country can begin to integrate health security into their efforts and encourage action.

National health security represents a wide range of ideas and concepts. As such, it can be difficult at times to see how the work you and your organization does on a daily basis contributes to health security. However, the concepts that comprise national health security are ones that are already ingrained in most public health efforts.

- Building stronger community health resilience
- Focusing on medical countermeasures such as having sufficient vaccine stockpiles and outbreak plans
- Sharing information across public and private sectors to improve preparedness and response
- Connecting public health with healthcare and emergency management

This guide serves to present ways that you, as a public health professional, can improve health security in your communities. These examples are just some of the ways that you can, or may already, work to support national health security, and will hopefully serve to inspire new ideas.

Additionally, this guide is just one of the resources available from ASPR in its continued efforts to support your work in public health while advancing the national health security agenda. Visit [phe.gov](http://phe.gov) for more information and resources.

## HOW CAN I USE THIS GUIDE?

### 1. Educate yourself

Use the material within this guide to better familiarize yourself with the concepts and elements of national health security. With the work public health practitioners like you implement on a daily basis, it can be easy to connect your work to national health security. The majority of the work many in public health are already doing is largely in support of national health security. And the ways in which you can work to advance those



efforts, build upon them, and strengthen them are ultimately ways that will be familiar and can easily integrate into your programs.

### 2. Try some of the activities

At ASPR, we have worked to outline within this guide specific examples of activities and efforts that you, as a public health practitioner, can enact that will support national health security. Read through these activities and try to identify one or two that seem most likely to integrate into your existing work. With a range of options including various levels of time and resource investment, we hope that you will find an opportunity to integrate national health security efforts.

### 3. Use it to inspire new ideas

This guide is not an exhaustive list of the opportunities available to you as public health professionals to support national health security. With its various objectives, our nation's health security strategy is as varied as the many areas and regions that comprise the country. The basic commonality across all the activities included here, is that they all work to support some element of national health security. In designing your own activities to support national health security, any effort that ultimately

## Health Security in Action!

He's been called "Fred's driver." He's been called "that guy." Michael McNulty, emergency operations director for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, says that's OK because Fred the Preparedness Dog is the one spreading the message of safety and resilience. After Fred, McNulty's German Shepherd, took shelter in the bathtub on a stormy day, his owner gave him a backpack with emergency supplies and promoted a picture on social media. Fred became so popular that he and McNulty now spend much of their time visiting schools, fairs, and other events to teach kids about preparedness and encourage them to take the message home. "They'll go to their parents and say, 'There was a dog at school today, and he had all this stuff. Why don't we have stuff?'" McNulty says. Fred the Preparedness Dog is just one way health departments are making emergency preparedness accessible to all and fostering a culture in which people of all ages are mindful of their health and resilience.

*(Source: 2016, NACCHO NHSS Strategic Messaging Guide)*

works to strengthen your community's health resilience or works to create stronger, new relationships between your organization and others can be considered a successful endeavor!

## HEALTH SECURITY PROJECT: Building Awareness

In your role as public health professionals, it's important to translate the National Health Security Strategy into activities and ideas easier for people to understand and identify.

Continued awareness building and encouragement to engage in specific actions is a large part of what you can do as public health experts to advance the national health security agenda in your city,

county, territory, or state. There are routine public health activities that you do everyday that can be related to preparedness to raise awareness about health security. Promote the importance of:

- First aid, CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), and bystander preparedness certifications
- Making personal and family preparedness checklists
- Attending public health or community health resilience events.

Here are some ideas on how you can work to support national health security by promoting specific messaging and activities:

### Leverage and Promote Preparedness Observances

Research what preparedness observances may already exist, such as National Preparedness Month or World Immunization Week, and make an effort to promote these among your audiences. Many observances offer useful resources online for materials to help advance their messages, such as social media posts, flyers and posters, brochures, and more. Leverage these resources so you don't have to spend time creating new ones.



### **Promote Cold & Flu Season Preparedness**

It's likely that you have promoted preparedness around cold and flu season before, but simple prevention efforts like these can have a major impact on protecting your community's health resilience and the nation's health security. Continue to think of new ways to bring this topic to the attention of your area's residents. Provide support to major business and schools for flu vaccination efforts.

### **Sponsor Everyday Health Activities & Information**

Perhaps not as widely publicized as cold and flu efforts, practicing and maintaining everyday health is critical to national health security and disaster preparedness. A population that is healthier to start is more likely to be resilient in a disaster. Educate on and promote efforts around home and personal sanitation, food safety, social distancing, and similar topics that help people stay healthy.

**Educate on the Importance of Certification & Training** Certifications and trainings such as CPR and first aid are simple but powerful ways in which your residents can support national health security efforts. Create new messaging and materials that are simple and easy to share on social media that show people how important such trainings are and more importantly, how and where they can sign up for them.



## **HEALTH SECURITY PROJECT: Community Health Resilience Roundtable Workshops**

Community resilience requires partnerships among community-based organizations of all kinds, including faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses, schools, and others. As a public health professional, one of the ways you can support stronger national health security is by creating valuable new relationships with key organizations and leaders in your region. As the experts in public health, you can serve as a leader in bringing different people in your community together and educating them on health resilience and security.

Hosting an event like a community health resilience roundtable or workshop is a great way to educate constituents on health security concepts and activities while also strengthening your organization by building new relationships.

### **Who to Invite**

Having the right people at your roundtable or workshops is important. Identify leaders and influencers of key organizations within your area, and make an effort to create a diverse list of invitees that represent many areas of your community, from education to business to emergency management and more.

- Hospital administrators
- City Hall officials
- Community and faith-based organization leaders
- Local law enforcement
- Business owners
- School board executives

Engaging in whole community planning for emergencies allows all challenges to be identified and planned for, and all resources to be leveraged.



## What to Do

In creating a truly engaging event that will add value for both your organization and your attendees, make an agenda that is packed with different fun activities to keep people interested. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Use the “Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships” (MAPP) process to plan with your communities. This resource, created in partnership by ASPR and NACCHO, is available at [nacchopreparedness.org](http://nacchopreparedness.org).
- Invite attendees to give an overview of what their organization does and some of the challenges they face. Attendees can discuss ideas to overcome these unique challenges or identify shared challenges. This allows people to get to know other areas of the community better while also creating strong new relationships by allowing these influential leaders to problem solve together.
- Dedicate some time to teaching your audience about what health resilience and security means for them and their community by presenting stories about other communities that have come together to build stronger health resilience.

- Have an open group discussion to identify ways in which attendees may already unknowingly be supporting health resilience and use these examples to identify new ways that group members can work together in the future.
- Group your attendees into different teams and assign each one to a specific example of a health security issue your community faces. Ask them to brainstorm ways to address these issues and then present their findings to the whole group.

Be sure to follow-up with attendees regularly, keeping them informed of new events or new efforts from your organization or agency. Use the ideas your roundtable guests develop to enact real world activities. You can ask engaged participants to attend additional future sessions, or host another

### Health Security in Action!

Hurricane Sandy displaced thousands of New York area residents while greatly damaging regional infrastructure and placing duress on its communications networks. However, thanks to the partnership of a number of non-government organizations (NGOs), that communications network was able to be maintained, allowing critical communications to continue among emergency management while also providing a way for citizens to connect with loved ones. The partnerships created an NGO whose mission is to assist communities with technology continuity and recovery during times of disaster. Through partnerships with the New York City and State governments and FEMA, the new NGO was able to provide temporary communications, resources, and technology assistance to affected communities. Internet-based telephone services were installed in critical fire stations, computers were added to command centers, and Wi-Fi infrastructure was restored in shelters and disaster recovery centers. By ensuring residents and response workers had continuous access to internet communications, this partnership helped storm survivors connect with their social networks and access help.

(Source: [FEMA](http://FEMA), [fema.gov](http://fema.gov))

event with an entirely new panel of guests. Relationship-building at an organizational level is an invaluable element in building stronger health security for your community.

## HEALTH SECURITY PROJECT: Social Media Activities

Thanks to its use by so many Americans and its real-time impact, social media continues to be a major strategy for public health education and engagement. And because the majority of social media activity takes place on people's smartphones and mobile devices, these channels provide public health advocates and professionals new ways to put their message right into the pockets of their audiences.

What's more, social media can be used to continue to build awareness of preparedness while also giving the opportunity for members of a community to connect with one another. Specifically, people who are at an increased risk of negative health consequences from a disaster or attack, such as the chronically ill, may be better able to connect with others online in order to build relationships. These relationships in a community provide the connectedness that can



### Health Security in Action!

One of the quickest and easiest ways a government agency can expand its capabilities is to partner with another organization or entity that already houses that expertise, building new relationships in the process. That's what the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene did, according to Division Chief Nicole Brown, when it combined resources with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency to improve the state's health security. "It was something our office had already been looking at and working on," Brown says. "We realized this would be a great bridge to bring together health security and public health preparedness." One of the emergency management agency's biggest appeals was its private sector integration program, which the health department believed would be a great asset. "We're trying to be more efficient in how we function and operate," Brown says. "We're utilizing the resources that already exist in the health department and crosscutting with the missions of other health agencies."

*(Source: 2016, NACCHO NHSS Strategic Messaging Guide)*

be critical during a disaster or attack, as friends or neighbors are most likely to be there first to help.

In working on national health security, incorporating citizen engagement and outreach through social media is a cost-effective strategy that can see high impact results. As such, identify one or two of the channels outlined here to focus on in engaging your audience on national health security education and efforts. If you're already using some of the channels, identify a new opportunity to expand your reach.

### # Social Media Networks

A whopping 80 percent of all Americans are active on social media sites! Create a page for your agency or organization where you can post news, event announcements, ideas for activities, and answer questions from citizens. Also, many neighborhoods and communities have group pages where neighbors are having conversations with each other. Join the groups you can find for your area and look for occasional

opportunities to share news, ask for volunteers, or provide advice on fun community health-building activities.

You also can use social media sites to connect and make new critical relationships with key organizations in your area, such as hospitals, clinics, other health professionals, community organizations and more. If you have upcoming events, you can use social media sites to create events pages and invite people to attend or promote your event to a wider audience.

Social media and text messages also offer ways to get vital information out quickly. With many emergency services, health organizations, and even news and government agencies depending on social media for information in crisis and disaster events, incorporating this platform into your outreach can be highly effective in the right situations.

Create an account for your agency or organization and follow all the relevant agencies and organizations in your area. Follow your community leaders and organizations too! That way, you can see what people are talking about and then post fun facts, activity ideas, or news announcements that correspond.

### Social Media in Disasters

- 80% of Americans expect emergency responders to monitor social sites.
- One in five people would try an online channel for help if unable to reach EMS.
- 18% of people use social media to get information about emergencies.
- One in four people would use social media to tell loved ones they were safe.
- More than a third expect help to arrive within 1 hour of posting need to social media.

*(Source: American Red Cross)*



## ▶ Social Media Video

If your organization or agency does not yet have a social media video channel, think about creating one. Video continues to be one of the most successful tools for online engagement. In fact, 80 percent of people watch videos online every day! And there are a number of ways you can use this tool:

- Film videos with experts that educate on specific topics that relate to health security, like building community health resilience or non-pharmaceutical interventions and medical countermeasures. Keep your videos short and high energy! **HINT:** There are a number of online resources that can be used to make videos using only moving text and animated graphics that present content in a fun visual way instead of the usual presentation format.
- Know of any events in your area that are examples of community health resilience or health security activities in action, such as health fairs, volunteer events, block parties, preparation activities, and so on? Attend these events and film them to show your audience what national health security looks like so they know how they can support it. Be sure to use professional equipment to ensure high-quality sound.

- Launch a video submission challenge in your area, asking people to submit videos showing how their community supports health resilience and health security. Offer to sponsor a community block party for the winners. And post the best submissions to your channel with participants' permission.

## Community-Based Platforms

Community- and neighborhood-based social media and online platforms continue to emerge as leading ways to connect neighbors. With millions of Americans engaging with each other through these platforms, local public agencies and organizations have a new way of reaching the people within their community like never before.

With dedicated information and accounts made specifically for local public agencies and organizations, these neighborhood-based platforms allow two-way communication with area residents that is in real time and focused on the topic of important public health and safety information. Use this new channel to share important information, post updates and news, solicit feedback, and ask for new engagement on community activities.



### Health Security in Action!

When disaster strikes in communities, the whole community is needed to respond. Even before a catastrophe, volunteers can help plan the response and ensure community members are healthy and resilient. Nearly 1,000 volunteer emergency response teams across the country play this role, and among the most active is the Macomb County Health Department's Medical Reserve Corps in Michigan. The corps strengthens the Macomb County community by recruiting and training non-medical and medical volunteers who can be ready and able to provide organized assistance to the department and surrounding communities in the event of a countywide public health emergency, large-scale disaster, terrorist event or disease outbreak. The corps is trained in emergency preparedness to support the county during a public health emergency. Members also volunteer at community events throughout the year such as flu vaccine clinics, health department emergency exercises, and first aid booths.

*(Source: 2016, NACCHO NHSS Strategic Messaging Guide)*

## HEALTH SECURITY PROJECT: Public-Private Partnerships

The health security of our nation depends on the efforts of all Americans. With 90 percent of critical health infrastructure operated by the private sector, incorporating public-private partnerships (PPPs) into preparedness and response planning is vital for creating truly health secure communities, serving as a key component in building the nation's community health resilience at the local level.

These partnerships are defined as one where there is a relationship between a public agency, such as the city's Department of Public Health, and a private sector entity, like a local non-profit. As a result of establishing these partnerships with private groups, public health agencies can benefit from greater participation in the delivery or financing of projects.

PPPs can also have advantages such as reducing development risk, mobilizing underutilized assets, adopting models, improving service to the community, and increasing cost effectiveness. The threats and risks that these partnerships guard against are diverse—severe weather, infectious disease, terrorist attacks—and the health impacts of them can vary greatly.

These unique stories of successful partnerships, presented by ASPR, demonstrate the incredible value that PPPs can have in strengthening our nation's health security, ensuring that citizens are prepared for, protected from, and resilient in the face of incidents with health consequences. Use these examples to inspire new relationships and partnerships that you, as public health professionals, can make within your region.

### **Amtrak Derailment**

In May 2015, an Amtrak train enroute from Washington DC to NYC derailed, injuring more than 200 passengers. The large volume of patients highlighted the need for a coordinated and regional approach to preparedness. Fortunately, the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP), the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DoH), and the regional health care

coalition (HCC) had long been working together to prepare local health care systems for disasters that could cause a surge in patients.

HPP-funded systems helped distribute notifications of emergency room capacity, facilitated communication, and enhanced patient tracking and triaging to help people get the care that they needed. Because these systems were in place before the train derailed, they were ready to protect health and save lives when seconds counted.

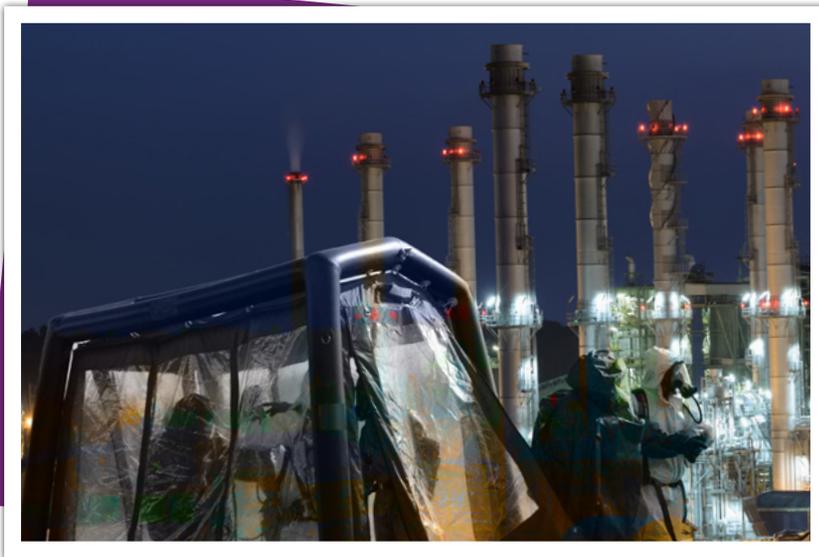
Even as emergency crews were still on the ground searching for victims, local health care facilities, EMS, and emergency management agencies, all members of HPP-supported HCCs, were already in action, working together to facilitate a swift, coordinated response. The HCC members in Pennsylvania collaborated to ensure that each member of their coalition had the necessary medical equipment and supplies, real-time information, communication systems, and trained health care personnel to respond to public health emergencies, including large scale accidents like the Amtrak train derailment. The operational response of HCC members, along with their systems and training, allowed for an effective response within an organized incident command structure, saving lives, improving care, and increasing accountability. *(Source: PHE.gov.)*

### **Partners in Preparedness Program**

In the wake of 2008's Hurricane Ike, the Victoria County, Texas, Office of Emergency Management set out to establish new relationships with area employers with the goal of expanding information sharing opportunities in preparation for and in response to future events. The resulting partnerships helped to create the Victoria Partners in Preparedness (Victoria PIP) Program.

The goals of this partnership are highly targeted, including developing multiple communication and information channels between local government and non-government entities, providing a forum to address new issues, and establishing joint preparedness training and exercise programs using a "whole-community" approach.

Thanks to the networks of its initial business partners, the program grew rapidly—from 12 private businesses to more than 100 local business owners, community leaders, educators, and volunteer organizations in less than 24 hours from its public launch, and now boasts more than 380 participants.





As a true partnership between public, private, and non-profit sectors, the Victoria PIP leadership group is diverse and works to set the strategic goals for the program. Within the program, there are segmented action groups, including special needs partners, volunteer and faith-based organizations, and educational partners. (Source: [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov).)

### **Business Recovery Program**

The Miami-Dade Business Recovery Program (BRP) was created in 2007 to assist businesses while recovering from a disaster and has since expanded to focus on overall community health and economic resiliency, including a diverse range of local organizations, from hospitals and clinics to food retailers and utility companies.

Designed to ensure private sector emergency preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery, the BRP consists of many businesses,

nonprofits, and educational institutions. A county-led initiative, the program operates in partnership with Florida International University, which dedicates a team to the ongoing development of unique tools, such as the Business Continuity Information Network (BCIN).

The BCIN operates as a web-based service where both public and private organizations can meet virtually to share critical information and resources to support continuity in a disaster. Using this information, emergency management can work with local businesses to share information like open/close status and damage assessment of area hospitals, pharmacies, clinics, grocery stores, and other entities critical to securing the health of residents.

Trained members of the BRP also have a presence in the county's Emergency Operations Center, allowing the private sector to directly access reliable situational information that can impact their continuity of operations and decision making while also providing a communication channel to report on operational information to the county, aiding in the sharing and utilization of resources and ultimately helping the community recover faster. (Source: [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov).)

By working to create private partnership like these with your public health agency or organization, you can make great strides in working to support national health security.

## **HEALTH SECURITY PROJECT: At-Risk Identifier Checklist**

For many people and organizations, it's easy to understand why at-risk individuals are a priority in disaster events, but it's not as easy to identify who these individuals are. Whether it's a regional health clinic, a church group, or a private business, it can be challenging for many to understand what qualifies as "at-risk."

As public health professionals, you can help others educate themselves on identifying at-risk individuals, so they can start to address the unique needs of this population in everyday and extreme disaster health security planning. Share this checklist with others as a way of reaching out, creating new partnerships and relationships, and advancing national health security.



## DO YOU KNOW WHICH MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMUNITY ARE AT-RISK?

Incorporating at-risk members of your community or organization into your disaster preparedness planning and community health resilience activities is critical, as these are the individuals who are most vulnerable in regards to their health in certain events, even those that are less severe.

Use this checklist to help you think about who among your population may be at-risk and how there may be a way to ensure their unique needs are taken into account.

### Who in your community is at-risk?

At-risk individuals are people that have special needs that may prevent them from having access to or receiving medical care before, during, or after a disaster or emergency. These needs may not be a formal medical diagnosis or easily labeled, but they generally include either access-based needs or function-based needs.

- Action-based needs means that individuals do not have easy access or cannot get to certain health services, like accommodations, transportation, medications, and so on.
- Function-based needs means that a person may have physical restrictions or limitations that makes them dependent on others for assistance in health-affected events.

Here is a list of some examples of at-risk individuals:

- ✓ Children
- ✓ Older adults
- ✓ Pregnant women
- ✓ Individuals with physical disabilities
- ✓ Individuals living in institutional settings
- ✓ Non-English speakers
- ✓ Homeless individuals
- ✓ People with chronic medical disorders
- ✓ People with a life dependence on medications
- ✓ People who depend on at-home medical equipment, such as ventilators

With a better idea of what types of people may qualify in your community as “at-risk,” you can now start to think about ways to incorporate them into your community health resilience planning activities. Here are some recommended considerations to ensure that both the access-based and function-based needs of your at-risk populations are addressed in your planning and activities:

### ✓ Communication

Individuals who may have limitations in how they receive information may require that materials or announcements be provided in different ways in formats accessible to them. This can include people who are deaf or hard of hearing, speak American Sign Language, have limited to no English proficiency, are blind, or have cognitive limitations. When designing new materials for your population, ensure that all potential communication needs are taken into consideration and accounted for.

### ✓ Maintaining Health

There are certain individuals who may require personal care assistance in the maintaining of daily activities, such as eating, dressing, and grooming. The needs of this group are unique and should have a place in your planning process.

### ✓ Independence

These are people who can function independently, as long as they have the required health devices or supplies, such as diapers and formula, wheelchairs and walkers, service animals, and so on. Ensure these material needs are accounted for.

### ✓ Services and Support

Some individuals require specific behavioral or mental health needs. In the event of a disaster event, how will those who need support for dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, severe mental illness, and more receive the services that they need?

### ✓ Transportation

Whether age, disability, temporary injury, poverty or any other of the many possible conditions that could prevent people from having easy access to transportation, there are many individuals who will need such services in disaster events or even in maintaining everyday health. This requires coordination to ensure access to mass transit or accessible vehicles for all who may need it.

**Looking for more information on at-risk individuals or community health resilience? Visit [PHE.gov](https://www.phe.gov).**



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