



DiversityPreparedness.Org E-Newsletter

Produced by the Center for Health Equality at the Drexel University School of Public Health with support from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Minority Health.

In This Issue

[Director's Desk](#)

[Topic of the Month](#)

[Events & Training](#)

[Initiatives & Publications](#)

[Voices From the Field](#)

Quick Links

[Take a Survey](#)

[Submit a Resource](#)

[Submit to Voices From the Field](#)

[DiversityPreparedness.Org Homepage](#)

[Contact Us](#)



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the Fourth Issue of the DiversityPreparedness.Org E-Newsletter. This issue features Pandemic Influenza as the topic of the month and provides links to a range of articles, reports, and translated materials that focus on the subject. Excerpts from a conversation with Anna DeBlois Buchanan and Caroline Barnhill of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) are also included highlighting ASTHO's At-Risk Populations and Pandemic Influenza Project.

Director's Desk:

Thoughts from Dennis P. Andrulis, PhD, MPH, Director of the Center for Health Equality and Associate Dean for Research at the Drexel University School of Public Health.



Working with Racially and Ethnically Diverse Communities to Prepare for Pandemic Influenza

The United States—and the world—have experienced major influenza pandemics at least two to three times each century. While these outbreaks threaten the health and life of millions, the toll in lives affected and lost are potentially catastrophic for many racially and ethnically diverse individuals and their communities. In many ways the legacies and lessons learned from other events parallel pandemic flu. That is, what makes these residents especially vulnerable are a complex mix of circumstances that present significant challenges to providing effective communication for prevention and outreach for treatment. Exposure to influenza may be affected by crowded living conditions that increase susceptibility, locus of care such as emergency departments and clinics, and greater use of public transportation. (1) Participation in or access to immunizations may be lower, while access to timely and effective care may affect successful response. Language and health literacy barriers may encumber understanding of what to do. And as with other emergency priorities, immigration status concerns may limit participation among those most susceptible.

Adapting pandemic planning and response to circumstances will once again need to place high priority on meeting diverse residents where they live. Using mobile health centers and other programs that bring services and treatment to these communities will potentially reduce exposure and travel time. Working to develop community based strategies for effective quarantine and isolation as well as ways to limit congregations of individuals may both increase adherence and reduce spread.

Actions proffered and endorsed by the National Consensus Panel on Emergency Preparedness and Cultural Diversity, and formally developed by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO) (2) highlight the need for early and sustained successful planning and response tailored to community need. Thus, identifying and engaging diverse populations who may be at risk and their key community organizations will be critical to these initiatives. Developing communication strategies around pandemic influenza priorities that take into account language, culture and literacy; tailoring voluntary and professional health care response to diverse populations' living and working conditions; adapting drills, testing response efficacy, and measuring effect must all be part of influenza education and action. For in the end, effective engagement of all residents regardless of race or ethnicity is essential to maximize healthy outcomes for our communities.

(1) Blumenshine P, Reingold A, Egerter S, Mockenhaupt R, Braveman P, Marks J. Pandemic influenza planning in the United States from a health disparities perspective. *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2008 May; [Epub ahead of print].

(2) Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. (2008). At-Risk Populations and Pandemic Influenza Project.

Topic of the Month: Pandemic Influenza

According to the World Health Organization, an influenza pandemic is a global disease outbreak that occurs when a new strand of influenza virus, against which the human population has no immunity,



spreads rapidly through communities, across countries, and around the world. Implicit in the definition of a pandemic is the notion that "everyone" is at-risk, as all geographic areas can potentially be affected and which no one is inherently immune. Yet past disasters and pandemic influenza outbreaks, for example the Spanish Flu of 1918, have shown that certain segments of the population, such as racial/ethnic minorities, suffer greater mortality, morbidity, social disruption, and economic loss. Factors that contribute to these disparities include: greater risk of exposure (living in densely populated urban areas); increased susceptibility (pre-existing poor health status and low-socioeconomic status); and barriers to treatment (lack of insurance coverage to receive care or geographic isolation).

Below are a collection of resources to help inform planning and preparedness activities to mitigate the effects of an influenza pandemic among racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Articles & Reports:

- **Pandemic Influenza Planning in the United States from a Health Disparities Perspective:** This article explores how different socioeconomic and racial/ethnic groups in the United States might fare in an influenza pandemic based on social factors that shape the likelihood of exposure, vulnerability, and timeliness/adequacy of treatment.

- **Eliminating Injustice Towards Disadvantaged Populations During an Influenza Pandemic:** This commentary outlines what needs to be done to eliminate potential injustices that may impact disadvantaged populations during an influenza pandemic.

- **At-Risk Populations Project:** ASTHO received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop recommendations on how to protect at-risk populations, such as those which are culturally isolated or have limited English proficiency, during an influenza pandemic. This webpage provides links to the full report, background tools, and additional planning resources.



Articles & Toolkits:

- **Promotores for Pandemic Influenza:** This toolkit, developed by the El Paso City-County Health and Environment District, provides a variety of materials to train lay health promoters on how to educate Hispanic/Latino communities about what they can do to prepare for an influenza pandemic.
- **Promising Practices for Pandemic Planning- Breaking Language Barriers with Preparedness Messages:** This brief article highlights the efforts of Emergency and Community Health Outreach (ECHO) Minnesota to effectively reach populations with limited English proficiency in public health emergencies.
- **Strategies for Improving Influenza Immunization Rates Among Hard-To-Reach Populations:** This article discusses the importance of community engagement and collaborating with non-traditional partners to meet the needs of hard-to-reach populations in a influenza pandemic.

- **Planning for an Influenza Pandemic- Social Justice and Disadvantaged Groups:** This report discusses the importance of addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups and vulnerable populations who would be at elevated risk in the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak.
- **Ethnic Media Roundtable Kit:** The Ethnic Media Roundtable Kit contains resources in various languages on pandemic influenza, seasonal flu, and all hazards emergency preparedness. The kit was distributed to members of the media who attended a roundtable discussion hosted by the California Department of Public Health.

Translated Materials:

- **Pan Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals & Families:** This resource provides a list of things to do in preparation for a pandemic. The resource is available in **Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, English, Farsi, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish,** and **Vietnamese.**
- **Pan Flu Preparedness Brochure- Individuals and Families:** This brochure highlights differences between annual and pandemic flu and provides information on what individuals and families can do to prepare. The resource is available in **Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, English, Farsi, Khmer/Cambodian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai,** and **Vietnamese.**
- **Pan Flu Preparedness Brochure- Community and Faith-Based Organizations:** This brochure highlights differences between annual and pandemic flu and provides information on what community and faith-based organizations can do to prepare and respond to the needs of the communities they serve. The resource is available in **Armenian, Chinese, English, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.**
- **Home Care for Pan Flu:** This handout contains information on how to provide home care in the event of pan flu outbreak, and is available in **Arabic, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, English, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.**

- **Pan Flu- What it is and How to Prepare:** This handout provides information on possible pandemic flu outbreaks, and is available in [Arabic](#), [Chinese Simplified](#), [Chinese Traditional](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Hindi](#), [Japanese](#), [Korean](#), [Russian](#), [Somali](#), [Spanish](#), and [Vietnamese](#).

- **Helping Handouts- Infectious Disease:** This resource contains seven different brochures on pandemic influenza and other emerging infectious diseases. The materials are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).



Below are links to recent and upcoming events and initiatives as well as recently published reports and articles.

Events & Training:

The Eighth UCLA Conference on Public Health and Disasters

May 3-6, 2009
Torrance, California

This multidisciplinary conference brings together academics, researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers from public health, mental health, community disaster preparedness and response, social sciences, government, media, and nongovernmental organizations to promote a dialogue and exchange of ideas. For more information on the conference program, speakers, and student poster session [CLICK HERE](#).

The 17th Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) Conference

May 18-22, 2009
Salk Lake City, Utah

This conference brings together representatives from VOAD member organizations and a range of sectors to enhance and improve the capacity of VOAD member organizations to serve their communities in times of disaster. For exhibitor and registration information [CLICK HERE](#).

Initiatives & Publications:

Analysis of Risk Communication Strategies and Approaches with At-Risk Populations to Enhance Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

This working paper, released by RAND in December 2008, presents the findings from a comprehensive assessment that included a review of the literature on emergency preparedness communication and public health messaging strategies, education and outreach materials for communication with at-risk populations, including those with limited English proficiency, and numerous on-site visits to identify gaps in risk communication practices with at-risk populations. To view the working paper in its entirety [CLICK HERE](#).

FEMA: Reaching Washington State's Diverse Communities

FEMA has made a concerted effort to inform all Washington residents of the federal recovery aid that is available to those affected by the severe winter weather that swept across the state in mid-January. FEMA representatives contacted 364 community-based organizations, 759 faith-based organizations, and partnered with tribal leaders to ensure that all communities were aware of the aid they were eligible for. Several teams of multi-lingual representatives met with members of diverse communities and have been invited to speak on Spanish-language radio stations and at Buddhist congregations. For more information [CLICK HERE](#).



DiversityPreparedness.Org Now on

The National Resource Center on Emergency Preparedness and Cultural Diversity has created a Twitter account to provide users with a stream of current information on new resources, funding opportunities, and upcoming events related to emergency preparedness and cultural diversity. To follow the DiversityPreparedness.Org Twitter feed [CLICK HERE](#).

Emergency Communication and Health Outreach (ECHO) Serves LEP Communities as the Red River Floods

The flooding of the Red River this spring affected a number of communities with limited English proficiency. ECHO reached out to hundreds of Spanish, Somali, Croatian, and Kurdish families in their native languages to ensure that they understood warnings and evacuation procedures. To learn more about ECHO's experience working with these communities [CLICK HERE](#).

FEMA Offers Disaster Assistance to Flood Victims

Residents of 26 North Dakota counties are eligible for disaster assistance as a result of severe storms and flooding that began on March 12, 2009. FEMA has provided guidance on the three-step process for receiving disaster assistance and has made this information available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Ready New York

In accordance with New York City's Office of Emergency Management (NYC/OEM) [Language Access Policy](#), printable emergency preparedness brochures have been made available in 14 languages, including Bengali, Urdu, and Yiddish. Topics include all-hazards preparedness, flooding, heat waves, and many others. To view the Ready New York translated materials [CLICK HERE](#).

Call for Voices from the Field

The National Resource Center is continually growing and updating its collection of resources and information. We are currently inviting individuals and organizations to submit stories from the field on their experiences working with culturally diverse populations across all phases on an emergency. Examples for stories include, but are not limited to, successful community partnerships, training curricula, promising practices, and lessons learned. These 1-3 page narratives will be catalogued on the DiversityPreparedness.Org website where users can access them as resources to help guide planning and practice activities. Authors will be given full credit for their work and can provide links to supplemental materials or organizational websites. To submit a story from the field [CLICK HERE](#).



Voices from the Field: Anna DeBlois Buchanan & Caroline Barnhill

An expansive body of evidence has shown that public health emergencies do not affect all members of a population equally. A wide range factors, including economic disadvantage, social isolation, physical/cognitive impairment, and limited English proficiency, contribute to the increased vulnerability of certain groups and put them "at-risk." In the event of pandemic influenza outbreak (pan flu) these groups are liable to suffer disproportionately adverse effects—a situation which necessitates a concerted effort by public health and emergency planning officials to meet their needs. Recognizing this demand, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) spearheaded a project to develop comprehensive guidance to integrate the distinct needs of these populations into public health preparedness plans. We spoke with Anna DeBlois Buchanan(1) and Caroline Barnhill(2) to learn more about the impetus behind the *At-Risk Populations Project*, the research methods they used, and the outcomes they hope to achieve.

In 2007, in the wake of recent disasters that had evidenced the need to better integrate vulnerable populations into emergency plans, ASTHO received a grant from the Influenza Coordination Unit of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop planning guidance for state, territorial, tribal, and local health departments on at-risk populations and pandemic influenza. As Ms. Buchanan explained, ASTHO recognized that the integration of at-risk populations into models of all-hazards preparedness was of paramount importance, but they felt that developing guidance around a specific type of event, such as pan flu, was a critical first step in achieving this goal.

In winter of that year, working in collaboration with the Centers for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP), 8-10 members of the project staff began to implement a rigorous research methodology to develop an advisory group of experts, topic specific workgroups, and orchestrate public, stakeholder and at-risk population engagement meetings. Buchanan explained that such a multi-tiered effort was necessary as there is an "intricate web of federal, state, volunteer, community, and faith-based agencies serving vulnerable populations." The perspectives of each of these sectors needed to be heard in order to develop comprehensive planning guidance.

While engaging such a diverse collection of stakeholders initially appeared to be a formidable task, Barnhill explained that after key individuals were identified a “snowball effect” occurred that allowed for other stakeholders to be readily identified and contacted.

In June 2008 ASTHO released draft planning guidance entitled *At-Risk Populations and Pandemic Influenza*. The report provides information on five key topics that were identified by stakeholders through a series of engagement meetings. These include: (1) collaborating and engaging at-risk populations in planning activities (2) identifying and collecting information on populations that are at-risk; (3) developing risk communication strategies to reach these populations; (4) the provision of services (both clinical and non-clinical); and (5) testing, measuring, and improving preparedness activities. Promising practices and lessons learned from the field are interwoven throughout the document and hyperlinked tables provide links to a wealth of relevant resources on the web. The guidance document was widely distributed across the internet and mailed in hardcopy to over 500 individuals.

Buchanan and Barnhill described the feedback they received on the report to be both positive and constructive. Some felt that the comprehensive document was too long and difficult to navigate, an issue that they are working to address in the next iteration which will be released in summer of 2009. This revised edition will incorporate the feedback that was acquired through comments as well as surveys that were sent out to health officials regarding the format, content, and usefulness of the report. Project staff have also made a focused effort to further engage the tribal community throughout the second round of the research process. Meetings have been arranged with the CDC Tribal Consultation Advisory Committee and members of the tribal community in Minnesota to provide guidance surrounding the array of issues that contribute to the vulnerability of certain tribal members.

Both Buchanan and Barnhill emphasized the importance of framing the report appropriately to increase the likelihood that it will be utilized by public health officials throughout the planning process. “I think the early perceptions were that this guidance would become a mandate and something the planning officials would need to add on to their workload... but this guidance is intended to help planners do what they are already doing, just more efficiently and effectively,” said Barnhill. Buchanan reinforced this sentiment, “The purpose is not to create a new set of actions that guide emergency planners... our philosophy is that state and local planners are already highly engaged in pan flu and all-hazards planning... these are a few things that they can adjust and implement to better serve at-risk populations.”

The [At-Risk Populations and Pandemic Influenza report](#) is currently available on the [ASTHO At-Risk Population Project website](#) in addition to a wide range of pan flu planning tools and background information about the report’s methodology.

(1) Anna DeBlois Buchanan, MPH is the Senior Director of Immunization and Infectious Disease at ASTHO. She can be reached via e-mail at abuchanan@astho.org.

(2) Caroline Barnhill, MPH is the Senior Analyst of Infectious Disease at ASTHO. She can be reached via e-mail at cbarnhill@astho.org.

We encourage you to share the National Resource Center with your peers and colleagues and welcome you to link to the website. Please also feel free to e-mail your comments and any feedback to our team. We look forward to working with you to making this site a resourceful and useful tool in advancing the preparedness of our nation's diverse communities.

Sincerely,

*Dennis Andrulis, Nadia Siddiqui and Jonathan Purtle
National Resource Center Team
Center for Health Equality
Drexel University School of Public Health
E-mail: diversitypreparedness@drexel.edu*

