

Public Health Preparedness and Response

Preparedness is a word that few seem to comprehend the meaning of. It is an activity that is performed daily across the nation and sometimes the efforts do not lead to immediate results, but the eventual return on investment is immeasurable. Preparedness activities are akin to a referee in a game. The best ones go unnoticed because they dictate the game without anyone knowing. Only when an incident occurs does their influence come to light. Fundamental preparedness enables response to occur seamlessly.

APHL plays a key role facilitating information and technology transfer between CDC and state and local public health laboratories (PHLs) to improve preparedness and response to all-hazard threats. At APHL, the Public Health Preparedness and Response (PHPR) Program is the lead for coordinating with local and state public health laboratories, CDC and other federal and non-governmental organizations to prepare for and respond to threats, such as anthrax and smallpox. APHL staff provides training, scientific guidance, communications and advocacy for state and local public health laboratories, which are at the forefront of protecting the nation from emerging threats.

Many people are familiar with the anthrax attacks of 2001, but few are aware of the daily and ongoing threats, which include the thousands of white powder and other letters sent to US financial institutions, embassies abroad and political officials. APHL supports the nation's public health laboratories that comprise the Laboratory Response Network (LRN), a critical asset to counter these threats.

In order to promote, discuss, define and explain the unique challenges faced by public health laboratories, APHL works to:

- Promote information and technology transfer between the CDC and other agencies to state local public health laboratories to support public health preparedness and response functions.
- Expand and enhance relationships among state and local public health laboratories, CDC, FBI, and other federal, state and local agencies.
- Provide operational support for the LRN, including the evaluation of new technologies and assays and the implementation of Laboratory Information Management Systems (LIMS) for exchanging data on biological threat agents.
- Promote policies in support of laboratory preparedness and response.

Ultimately, these activities will support the improvement of **Public Health Preparedness and Response laboratory practice**. Other specific activities this year include:

- Developed and delivered training on Chain-of-Custody, Partnerships with First Responders and Sentinel Clinical Laboratories, Role of Civil Support Teams and Continuity of Operations Planning.
- Conducted performance evaluation studies for LRN-B assays.
- Supported streamlining of data messaging for LRN-B assays.
- Helped shape the new five year CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Cooperative Agreement, Capabilities Guidance and Performance Measures.
- Monitored regulations and other policies, providing input on items such as, biosafety and biosecurity.
- Surveyed state public health laboratories and issued a report on the status of preparedness and response.

Links:

- <http://www.aphl.org/aphlprograms/phpr/Pages/default.aspx>
- http://www.aphl.org/aphlprograms/phpr/ahr/Documents/PHPR_2011_AllHazardsReport.pdf
- http://www.aphl.org/AboutAPHL/publications/Documents/PHPR_2011June_AlgorithmAndGuidelinesWhitepaper.pdf

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