



Readiness Response Report

Office of Public Health
Preparedness and Response
(OPHPR)

Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK: JONATHAN BEST

It has been a very busy few months. The Medical Countermeasures full scale exercise is completed, Zika remains a threat, and the increasing number of terrorist acts occurring around the world cause us all concern. We are all keenly aware that the need for a public health response always exists, so being prepared is essential. Complacency is not an option for public health preparedness and response. Our efforts consistently address that all of our partners keep preparedness on their minds even during quiet times. One of the challenges over the last several years has been reviewing and testing our plans to determine if they are truly operational. In some cases we have refined plans to better reflect the reality of our present situation. Those realities include reduced staffing, redefined organizational structures and less funding. We are fortunate that during this past year Ebola funding has cushioned the impact. With the new budget year our challenges continue. This budget period we experienced a 6.2 % reduction in our Public Health Emergency Preparedness grant. This will not have a direct impact on funds allocated to local health departments or districts presently funded this year. We anticipate absorbing this reduction internally at DPH. This is not an easy process and may not be sustainable during future grant periods. We may be required to evaluate how and what we do to prepare for future public health emergencies. We do not know what future funding will look like but the impact of any reductions will be felt by all.

Our progress in the development of Healthcare Coalitions continues. Our last Healthcare Coalition meeting focused on Cyber Security Threats. Attendee evaluations were positive and indicated that we should provide similar group trainings activities in the future.

In October we will host for the state a full scale exercise in collaboration with the Regional Catastrophic Mass Fatality Management (MFM) System Program. *Continued on page 2*

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK: Continued

This is a unique opportunity for partners to gain insight into how Mass Fatality Systems operate. Our regional planning partners from New York City and New Jersey were delighted to hear that 80 people registered in the first week! This program will be educational but also provide technical support to regions developing family assistance plans. We hope everyone takes advantage of this unique and exciting opportunity!

Preparedness continues to be a priority for DPH. As we move forward and work together with all our partners we can only get better at providing for the 3.2 million residents in Connecticut. Thank you for your commitment and dedication.

ZIKA RESPONSE

Dr. Randy Nelson

With the summer in full swing, mosquito-transmitted diseases are an important concern for travelers. Transmission of Zika virus is ongoing in many countries and territories in the Caribbean, Central and South America and Mexico. It is endemic in parts of Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands. It is recommended that pregnant women avoid travel to these areas and that all travelers take precautions to avoid mosquito bites. As of July 27, 45 people including 3 pregnant women have been diagnosed in Connecticut with travel-associated Zika virus infections. DPH developed signage and risk communication information for travelers at Bradley International Airport. Additionally, DPH facilitates diagnosis by offering testing at the State Public Health Laboratory.

While *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, the primary vector for Zika, Dengue and Chikungunya viruses, are not present here, a related species, *Aedes albopictus* is found in some towns, mostly in southeastern Connecticut. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) conducts mosquito trapping and testing for viruses including Zika from June through October to help guide prevention efforts in the unlikely event that infected mosquitoes are identified. Results of the mosquito monitoring program can be found on the DPH website. At a press conference on July 21, 2016, Governor Malloy, DPH and CAES provided updates including plans to conduct "Sentinel Screening". This involves testing people from high risk areas (predominately Fairfield and New Haven County) who have Zika symptoms but may not have traveled to Zika-affected regions. Testing of up to 10 patients per week will be conducted at various outpatient health clinics in Southwest CT, and more testing sites/towns will be added if necessary. The purpose of this testing is to supplement the mosquito monitoring program to help identify potential local transmission of Zika. *More Zika updates on page 5 (Grants) and 11 (Communications)*

COMMUNICATIONS

Elizabeth Conklin

Zika Risk Communications

Bilingual risk communications fliers continue to be distributed around the state to various locations including WIC offices, public libraries, travel clinics, health departments, Planned Parenthood, and any agency that requests materials. The awareness campaign at Bradley Airport for travelers continues, including ongoing airing of bilingual public service announcements (PSAs) at security locations featuring the DPH Commissioner and the LT Governor. Wallet guides for travelers going to Puerto Rico are distributed. Additional flights, including to Miami are being pursued.

State Zika website: www.ct.gov/zika (open in Chrome) -bilingual content

CT CAES website: www.ct.gov/caes mosquito testing surveillance

Crisis and Risk Communications Training

- **September 13** -Milford Hospital
- **September 28** -Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Torrington
- Register at CT Train: www.ct.train.org. Course #1061289

Media training

DPH will be offering a 1-day interactive media/spokesperson training designed to assist capacity and capability building of agencies as it relates to developing subject matter experts and public information officers who deal directly with the media. Details forthcoming.

SAVE THE DATES!

Key upcoming statewide preparedness events

• September 8, 2016	HHS Region 1 Medical Countermeasures Summit
• October 13-19, 2016	Governor's Statewide Emergency Preparedness Planning Exercise (EPPI)
• October 24-28, 2016	Mass Fatality Regional Exercise

More information and specific details will be shared when confirmed.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

David Kallander

Worker Safety during the Summer Months

DPH's Environmental and Occupational Health Assessment Program wants to remind Connecticut workers to be aware of potential health and safety hazards when working outdoors during the summer months. Depending on the type of activity being performed, outdoor work can expose individuals to a variety of hazards including:

- Extreme heat
- Excessive sun exposure
- Severe weather events
- Poisonous plants and animals
- Bites from insects such as mosquitoes and ticks that can carry diseases like Lyme Disease or West Nile virus

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) website has information and recommendations for preventing occupational injuries and exposures on their website: <http://bit.ly/1xOE0Mh>

Summer brings Chemical Exposure Incidents

Local health departments and staff in DPH's Environmental Health Section have been assisting in response efforts to chemical release incidents that tend to peak during the summer months. In July, at least 10 people suffered eye and respiratory irritation resulting in six individuals being sent to emergency rooms following chemical exposure at a swimming pool. This is often due to a problem with the pool's automatic chlorine feeder. Such incidents occur frequently. DPH's Occupational Health Program has a health alert on the DPH web site for the safe use and handling of pool chemicals that includes links to other sites with information: <http://bit.ly/29PdWrL>

KUDOS!

The West Haven Health Dept. is happy to welcome Steven Dillman as the new PHEP Coordinator. Steve is a former firefighter and paramedic with a wealth of experience in emergency services. His contact info is sdillman@westhaven-ct.gov or PH:(203) 314-1794.

OPHPR STAFF DIRECTORY

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GRANTS & CONTRACTS

Sandra Ferreira and Diana Lopez Villegas

HHS-HPP Contracts

Budget Period 4 (BP4) ended on June 30, 2016. Please review contract language that includes end-of-year Fiscal and Program Report due dates.

- For most contractors, program reports were due no later than July 15, 2016. Contractors with outstanding reports are reminded to please email these to hpp.dph@ct.gov;
- Final fiscal reports are due no later than August 30, 2016. Please submit the UCOA workbooks to DPH-CGMS-FinReports@ct.gov;
- At the close of each fiscal year, CDC requests we submit evidence of contributed goods and services from our contractors. To comply, the In-Kind/Cash Contribution form was emailed to specific HPP contractors with a due date of July 30, 2016. We thank you for your quick response.
- Requests to submit BP5 budgets for approval were emailed in June. Budgets were to be submitted to Diana López Villegas at Diana.LopezVillegas@ct.gov. The approved budgets will be returned to contractors in their first UCOA Workbooks for BP5.

Local Health Department (LHD) Contracts

LHDs will have the opportunity to carry forward total balance funds from their FY16 Year 1 awards. The final approved Fiscal Reports (FERs) will include the exact amount that will be carried forward. Those LHDs with carry-forward funds will receive an amended contract for review and signature at the beginning of October, 2016. Once returned, these signed amended contracts will be processed for full execution.

PHEP and HPP Regional Ebola Funding

The deadline for completing the final expenditure and program reports for PHEP and HPP Ebola funding is August 15, 2016. Any unspent funds from the contracts will be carried forward to BP5 and reflected in the new UCOA and also reflected in an amended contract. The regional PHEP Ebola grant ends on June 30, 2017. The HPP Ebola grant ends in May, 2020.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES & EMERGING PATHOGENS

Alan Siniscalchi

Seasonal Influenza

Although the 2015-16 influenza season officially ended in late May, sporadic influenza isolates were still being reported in July. Influenza activity had peaked during March in Connecticut and throughout the nation. While influenza A (2009 H1N1) was the predominant isolate during the peak season, a higher percentage of influenza B viruses were identified in April and May within Connecticut. Fortunately, this year's influenza vaccine remained a good match to circulating flu viruses throughout the 2015-16 season. The DPH maintains surveillance for outbreaks and newly emerging strains of novel influenza viruses throughout the summer.

Viral Hemorrhagic Fever

The WHO and the CDC continue to maintain ongoing vigilance in West Africa to detect Ebola viral disease, Lassa fever and other emerging viral hemorrhagic fever cases. The DPH continues to work with Connecticut hospitals and other providers to ensure that statewide readiness is maintained in the event of future outbreaks.

MERS

Epidemiology staff are reviewing the newly released CDC interim guidance for the monitoring and movement of persons potentially exposed to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). The DPH conducts MERS-CoV testing of travelers from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula presenting to Connecticut hospitals with severe respiratory symptoms.

CT TRAIN

Danny White

CT TRAIN is Connecticut's Learning Management System (LMS) for public health professionals that provides access to numerous courses at the state and national level. CT TRAIN has over 25,000 registered users including many involved in the Incident Command System (ICS). CT Train offers registration for in-person courses as well as online/ Web-based learning. **CT Train is in the process of updating the user interface which is scheduled to launch soon.**

To create an account and search for available preparedness-related trainings, or to manage your workshop, go to www.ct.train/org. For more information contact Danny White at 860-509-7557 or danny.white@ct.gov

TRAININGS & EXERCISES

Alan Boudreau and Mike Mozzer

HHS Region 1 Medical Countermeasures Summit: September 8, 2016

In September, the CT DPH Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response will host the Northeast Region, New York and New Jersey Medical Countermeasures (MCM) Summit. The Summit will be held at the Connecticut National Guard's Col. Robert B. Nett Leadership Training Hall at Camp Niantic in East Lyme. The MCM Summit will be attended by our state, regional, and federal partners responsible for supporting medical countermeasures efforts. Our regional partners will share lessons learned from their drills and exercises, and share their programs' best practices. Our federal partners will provide updates to grants, programmatic information, and will share best practices from other regions.

Regional Mass Fatality Management Training: October 25-27, 2016

This Fall CT DPH will host a regional mass fatality management training at the CT National Guard's Camp Hartwell/New England Disaster Training Center and the Windsor Locks Readiness Center. The event will consist of both classroom and field training. CT DPH has collaborated with partners from New York City, New York State, Northern New Jersey and Northeastern Pennsylvania. The coalition is led by the New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (NYC OCME). NYC OCME is handling the registration, which will begin soon.

- **Day 1** (10/25): Will provide an overview of the week's activities, introduce participants to the scenario and provide a safety briefing in the morning before transitioning to on-scene recovery operations in the afternoon.
- **Day 2** (10/26): Will focus on disaster morgue operations, with participants training in the mobile morgue.
- **Day 3** (10/27): Will provide training on family assistance centers. There will be opportunities to participate or observe all or portions of the training.

STAY INFORMED!

All DPH press releases, including Zika-releases, are posted on the DPH website main page: www.ct.gov/dph as well as on social media. Be sure to follow CT DPH on Twitter and Facebook to stay informed about Zika and all public health updates.

GRANTS & CONTRACTS -continued

Sandra Ferreira and Diana Lopez Villegas

Zika Virus Disease (ZVD)- Grant monies

DPH press release on July 11, 2016:

"DPH has received \$320,564 in federal emergency preparedness funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address the Zika virus in Connecticut. The funds will be used to continue implementing the state's Zika Surveillance & Response Plan, which was drafted at the request of Governor Dannel Malloy in January to deal with the threat of Zika virus. Funding will also be used to track Zika-positive pregnant women and their babies to monitor for microcephaly, other serious birth defects and adverse pregnancy outcomes linked to Zika." The full press release is at www.ct.gov/dph

Governor Malloy press release on August 1, 2016:

"CT DPH will be receiving a \$579,055 grant from the CDC to support and enhance the state's efforts to protect Connecticut residents from Zika virus and monitor serious birth defects, like microcephaly, and other adverse health outcomes that can be caused by Zika virus.

A portion of this funding will be used by DPH and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) to continue implementation of the Laboratory testing and enhanced mosquito surveillance portions of the State Zika Virus Surveillance and Response Plan, which was designed based in part on past experiences addressing West Nile Virus in the state. Funding will be used to build on CT's existing Birth Defects Registry System to monitor for cases of microcephaly and other central nervous system defects that could be caused by Zika virus. Funding will also be used to coordinate with the Birth to Three program and provide families with information on resources if they have a child born with Zika-related birth defects, to disseminate prevention messages and materials to both providers and expecting parents, and to monitor health and developmental outcomes of children born to women with positive or inconclusive Zika virus test results."

On August 2, 2016 the CDC awarded DPH's Birth Defects Registry a \$400,000 grant to fight the Zika virus. This new grant will closely collaborate with the \$580,000 grant.

The full press release is available at www.ct.gov

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Raffaella "Ralf" Coler

The DPH Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) has been hard at work, transitioning under new leadership.

At the CT EMS Expo on June 1-4, OEMS staff presented “2016 OEMS Update”, which provided information on current initiatives and projects. In July, the initial version of the CT EMS Statewide Protocols was released. This document creates a seamless statewide base upon which all EMS providers will practice in the pre-hospital environment. This multi-year project was led by Dr. Richard Kaman, State EMS Medical Director, and we deeply appreciate the collaboration of our entire EMS community. This is a consensus document, discussed by the Regional Medical Advisory Committees, working with the CT EMS Medical Advisory Committee and the CT EMS Advisory Board. It is an adaptation of New Hampshire’s protocols; our eventual goal is to have unified EMS guidelines throughout New England.

Our Regional Coordinators continue to work with local and regional EMS stakeholders on mass casualty, active assailant and other various training and exercise initiatives. If you would like assistance in planning an exercise, or would like an HSEEP evaluator for your exercise, contact your Regional Coordinator. Contact information can be found on the OEMS webpage found within the DPH website at www.ct.gov/dph : key word OEMS

MEDICAL COUNTERMEASURES OPERATIONAL READINESS REVIEW (MCM ORR)

Anna Sigler

In June, staff at DPH’s Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR) finished conducting the local Medical Countermeasures Operational Readiness Reviews. Overall, 39 reviews were conducted by OPHPR staff and 2 were conducted by the CDC. DPH would like to thank our local health partners for their hard work and patience throughout the implementation period of this new review tool. While we are still in the process of compiling the data from the reviews and identifying common strengths and weaknesses throughout the state, preliminary results indicate POD site set-ups and outdated documents (older than 5 years) were some of the most frequently cited areas for improvement. In Budget Period 5 (BP5), DPH OPHPR staff will begin implementing the technical assistance plans and continue working with local health departments as we move towards the CDC goal of an overall “established” level of preparedness by 2022.

MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

Katherine McCormack

Connecticut’s Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) does not go on vacation. Summer is a great time to regroup, recruit, and for some of the CT MRC units, get started on the objective(s) of their 2016-17 NACCHO Challenge Awards.

The Uncas Health District held a VIP introduction session for the Region 4 Virtual Operations Support Team (VOST) in Colchester to introduce its Challenge Award initiative. The Region 4 team completed initial training sessions and will continue training during the summer and into early fall. Region 3 is in discussions with Region 4 to consider partner/expansion opportunities.

The Torrington Area Health District scheduled and kicked off June, 2016 training for Project Mitigate, focused on bringing a harm reduction train-the-trainer session to the Northwest Corner. Project Mitigate, led by MRC unit leadership, is Torrington’s Challenge Award Project focused on giving participants the tools necessary to teach caregivers and those struggling with opioid addiction, care and coping strategies.

All MRC units are being offered an opportunity to participate in the October, 2016 Mass Casualty Exercise as registration volunteers and exercise ambassadors. The Capitol Region MRC will cover medical triage and first aid support.

CT PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

Diane Noel

As part of the State Public Health Laboratory’s continuing efforts to provide training to our laboratory partners, a sentinel laboratory preparedness conference was held on May 25, 2016 that focused on biosafety and Ebola virus disease response for the clinical laboratory. The conference included a hands-on demonstration for donning and doffing personal protective equipment (PPE) for the clinical lab, a live demonstration of safe use of a biological safety cabinet, and an interactive presentation on how to perform a biological risk assessment. Additional topics included an overview of Biosafety level 2 activities involving infectious microorganisms and laboratory animals with Biosafety level 3 practices, the tiered approach to clinical response for Ebola, as well as an accounting of the planning and capacity that goes into becoming an Ebola Assessment Hospital laboratory. In an attempt to accommodate those who could not attend this event, this conference will be offered again on September 13, 2016.