

**Public Health Preparedness – Returning to Public Health Core Values  
Lane County Oregon Preparedness Mentoring Demonstration Project**

*Promoting community resiliency and preparedness through community building, positive framing and participant centered techniques.*

**Background:**

Recent disasters continue to illuminate the vulnerability of people who are socially marginalized and the importance of continuing the operations of community based organizations that serve our most vulnerable citizens. To address this need, Lane County Public Health’s Emergency Preparedness Program designed and implemented a mentoring program and curriculum to assist Lane County Community Based Organizations (CBOs) who serve homeless populations successfully write, adopt, and test emergency preparedness plans, policies and work practices. Emphasis was placed upon preparations for a pandemic illness, but strategies applicable to all hazards were incorporated.

**Vision:**

Preparedness will be seamlessly integrated into everyday work practices of organizations

**Mission:**

Create a resilient, reliable network of agencies capable of carrying out their mission during & after emergency

**How:**

- One-on-one mentoring
- Series of three workshops

**Mentoring:**

Participating organizations received at least 3 mentoring visits from project staff. The Mentor helped the participating agency team think creatively about how to develop the most effective plan for their agency. Mentors primary responsibilities were to coach and assist in the development of a manageable “Action Plan” by:

- Assessing initial preparedness status
- Offering technical assistance to develop, update and maintain a plan
- Providing guidance on the planning process by suggesting ways to encourage staff and leadership buy-in, sharing practical planning tools, and advising on the development of reciprocal support agreements with other community and government agencies.

Mentors did NOT: write plans, facilitate planning meetings, or otherwise participate in the agency planning process

The mentoring methodology incorporated strategies from the social and behavioral sciences that consider circumstances and past experience to develop change strategies. By presenting a menu of possible options to choose from but ultimately having the participant choose the course of action best suited to their agencies’ specific resources and circumstances, change was perceived by the agency as something doable, helpful and often necessary.

**Workshops:**

Three workshops were conducted for all project participants at two-three month intervals that were synchronous with the mentoring visits and provided training and tools to help participants develop their plans:

Workshop 1 - Lays the foundation for the mentoring program and introduces participants to preparedness concepts for community-based organizations.

Workshop 2 – Continued to expand upon the Prepare to Prosper philosophy by introducing the Incident Command System and the importance of formal partnerships using Memoranda of Understanding.

Workshop 3 – Using a Pandemic Influenza scenario, participants were able to evaluate the agency plans they had developed.

## **Curriculum**

The curriculum adopted by Lane County was designed to empower participating organizations to become resilient during a disaster. Using the "Prepare to Prosper" model developed by Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disaster (CARD), organizations and individuals enhance their potential to carry out their mission during and after an emergency by:

- Making preparedness efforts creative, easy and fun
- Using only positive messages everyone can embrace- No fear or threat based messages.
- Starting anywhere even if it seems small.
- Reinforcing the concept that Community Based Organizations are completely capable of being prepared and helping their community during and following a disaster. Prepare to be the best you can be, in any situation.

## **Results/Outcomes:**

All participating CBOs developed, at minimum, (1) plans to communicate with clientele; (2) plans to sustain identified essential functions during and after an emergency; (3) a description of the organizational emergency operations structure; and (4) an identified single point of contact for public health emergency messages and alerts.

In addition, many agencies took other important steps including establishing planning teams, posted signs, built up emergency cache's and "go-kits", trained staff, created emergency contact lists; as well as many other actions.

## **Conclusions/Implications-**

Through this project, support in the form of training and mentorship, increased participants confidence and motivation to plan for emergencies. This project illustrates the value of positive messaging, and "starting where people are" to increase integration of emergency preparedness into regular planning and work practices. It also highlights effective practices for building trusting relationships between local government and community based organizations. The end result is increased resiliency of CBOs, which in turn enables a reliable communication and support network for socially marginalized populations before, during, and after emergencies.

More information:

Contact: Brian ([Brian.K.Johnson@co.lane.or.us](mailto:Brian.K.Johnson@co.lane.or.us)) or  
Selene ([Selene.Jaramillo@co.lane.or.us](mailto:Selene.Jaramillo@co.lane.or.us))

Visit the project website and view project materials: [www.regonline.com/preparewrkshps](http://www.regonline.com/preparewrkshps)