

University of Minnesota: Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center - Overview

The University of Minnesota: Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center (U-SEEE PERL) works to meet the preparedness and response educational needs of the US public health workforce. The PERL Center works with partners to modify, develop, and deliver state, local, and tribal requested training. Competency-based learning activities attempt to address the needs of and enhance community resilience. University of Minnesota faculty members along with community practice partners, extend their expertise to learning activities aimed at mid-level public health workers in a wide range of preparedness areas. Learning formats include online modules, face-to-face workshops and experiential exercises, computer-based simulations, mobile applications, videos, webcasts, and other modes of learning.

Partners

The U-SEEE PERL Center collaborates with Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota to modify, develop, and deliver state, local, and tribal partner-requested education and training programs.

National Network of Learning Centers

U-SEEE PERL is part of a network of training centers, called the Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Centers (PERLC), which is funded by the CDC. The PERLC serve in a national capacity to meet the preparedness and response training and education needs of the US public health workforce. The PERLC provide competency-based training to state, local, and tribal public health authorities within defined service areas. In doing so, PERLC provide specialized training, education, and resources, in addition to exercising consultations for partners on request. PERLC are acknowledged for their unique capacity to adapt and tailor preparedness training to meet stakeholder requirements. The PERLC are established within the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)-accredited schools of public health and serve as an important national resource to meet the requirements of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA), Sec. 304 (d).
<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/bioterror07/PAHPAPublicLaw.pdf>



Key Activities

Major project areas for the U-SEEE PERL Center are:

Education and Credentialing Opportunities for the Public Health Workforce

U-SEEE PERL develops and delivers core competency-based education and training for the public health workforce and partners in preparedness. Courses create a continuum of learning and credentialing opportunities from face-to-face and online continuing education to on-campus intensive and online academic courses for undergraduate and post-graduate learners. Participants include audiences of all levels of expertise and backgrounds, representing professionals in the field, pre-professionals, and returning students. Course lengths range from brief, just-in-time formats to in-depth semester-long courses. Incorporating coursework at the annual University of Minnesota Public Health Institute, U-SEEE PERL supports certificate programs in Preparedness, Response, and Recovery and Food Protection, as well as the Veterinary Public Health Program (DVM/MPH) and Executive Program in Public Health Practice (MPH).

Online Simulations for Preparedness

U-SEEE PERL is a leader in the development of interactive online simulations that offer learners an opportunity to learn and apply public health response skills and concepts in realistic scenarios ranging from a natural disaster to a severe respiratory infection outbreak to a terrorist attack. Additionally, U-SEEE PERL has partnered with U-SEEE PERRC researchers to translate research findings into online training and practice tools addressing best practices in evidence-based public health preparedness.



Key Accomplishments

Strength and Resiliency: Emergency Preparedness for Tribal Leaders and Program Directors

A request from Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe resulted in the development of a training video for tribal leaders on their responsibilities in preparing for and responding to public health emergencies. Several tribes in U-SEEE PERL's catchment area, including the Wisconsin-based Lac Courte Oreilles and the Ho-Chunk Nations joined in this partnership. The video has been disseminated to leaders of 585 tribal groups across the US. In addition, this video was distributed to the response community following Hurricane Sandy and a link to the video is planned for FEMA's website.

Mobile Preparedness Training: Just-in-Time and Always in Your Pocket

U-SEEE PERLC has produced a suite of mobile applications (apps) for behavioral health needs in public health preparedness – combining PERL expertise in education with the practical experiences of those in the field. Now available online, and as a mobile app for Android and iPhone, the PFA app allows responders to brush up on their PFA skills just-in-time for deployment. The soon-to-be-released Responder Self Care app will aid responders in practicing Self Care once deployed. U-SEEE PERL believes these apps provide a template to build upon for bringing emergency response education into the mobile age; as one of our respondents wrote, "Oh the possibilities!"

Disaster Behavioral Health: Facilitating a Psychologically Supportive Response to a Disaster

A perceived gap in training for behavioral health responders was identified in U-SEEE PERL's first year by Minnesota's Hennepin County Department of Public Health. This resulted in the creation of a 2-day workshop for behavioral health practitioners to help them translate clinical skills into interventions that are appropriate and effective during a disaster response. A foundational part of this area is recognizing and advocating for the role of behavioral health within the Incident Command System as a needed support for both survivors and responders. This training continues to evolve as evaluation tools are developed for the knowledge gained through the training and the skills demonstrated in a culminating tabletop exercise.

Reaching Everyone: Mass-Dispensing and Closed Points of Dispensing Training

The revision of an online training module on mass-dispensing sites and a request from Minnesota's Dakota County Department of Public Health for training on closed points of dispensing resulted in the development of two new online modules, Closed POD Partnership Training and PODs (points of dispensing): Public Health Training for Staff and Volunteers. A goal of training 75 individuals between October 1, 2012 and September 29, 2013 was surpassed in February 2013 for both modules.

CDC Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Centers (PERLC)

For more information about the PERLC program please email us at perlcprogram@cdc.gov or visit our website at <http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/perlc.htm>.