

## Illinois Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center -Overview

The Illinois Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center IPERLC, housed in the MidAmerica Center for Public Health Practice at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health (UIC SPH), provides education services to enhance the capacity and performance of our public health workforce partners in Illinois. These practices aim to train workers in preparation for and response to man-made and natural disasters. To ensure a competent and prepared workforce, IPERLC works with its partners to assess, develop, deliver, evaluate, and recognize the attainment of continued competency-based training and education, using the competency sets developed for public health preparedness and response. IPERLC deploys existing training courses, or updates, reformats and customizes content using a variety of instructional modalities to meet the needs of our practice partners.

## Partners

IPERLC partners include governmental public health agencies, statewide and community-based organizations, and faith-based groups. Among current partners are the Illinois Department of Public Health, Cook County Department of Public Health, Chicago Department of Public Health, Illinois Public Health Association, Illinois Primary Health Care Association, Illinois Rural Public Health Association; and several other non-profit agencies and organizations developing and delivering training activities that address both core public health and preparedness competencies as well as the PHEP target capabilities.

## National Network of Learning Centers

IPERLC 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 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

IPERLC engages in a wide range of activities to meet the preparedness training needs of the public health workforce and its partners. To date, key activities have resulted from comprehensive needs assessments and collaborative meetings with the various partner groups. While identifying, developing, and delivering competency-based preparedness training courses have been a major service offered to our partners, IPERLC has also been involved in a number of other noteworthy programmatic activities that go beyond addressing targeted training needs. Some of these activities are highlighted below.



## Key Accomplishments

- **Crosswalk of PHEP Capabilities and Public Health Preparedness & Response Core Competencies**  
The IPERLC partners requested the development of a crosswalk between the Public Health Preparedness (PHEP) Capabilities and the Preparedness and Emergency Response Core Competencies as a resource for enhancing training plans. Two documents were prepared; the first document is a crosswalk of competencies at the individual level, while the second is a crosswalk at the organizational level.
- **Online Public Health Emergency Preparedness Certificate Program**  
IPERLC developed the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Certificate program as part of its Year 2 work plan. This 4-course (14- credit) certificate program mirrors ASPH's recently released Master's-Level Public Health Preparedness and Response Competency Model. In conjunction with the ongoing Online MPH Program in Community Health Sciences, the courses in the new certificate program allow an individual to complete an online MPH degree with a specialization in public health preparedness and response. The program will begin in January, 2013.
- **The Illinois Collaborative Student Independent (I-CSI) Study Program**  
The ICS-I study program created a partnership between IPERLC and health departments to promote training of public health students in core competencies essential to preparedness and response, through the projects they engage in at assigned health departments. The program promotes collaboration between practitioners at local health departments and IPERLC through supervision and mentorship on specific surveillance and outbreak-related projects. We hope for this program to create a "pipeline" of students with strong interest and expertise in preparedness that may then be hired by health departments in the future.
- **Health Department Training Program in Field Epidemiology**  
To address current training needs identified for health department personnel, IPERLC created the *Health Department Training Program in Field Epidemiology*, a series of intensive training courses in field epidemiology/outbreak investigation that was offered over a 10 week period. Applicants from health departments state-wide were selected to participate. The program was coordinated by a former State Epidemiologist. In its infancy, the program could only accept 5 applicants its first year, however, with growing interest, IPERLC has extended this opportunity to 12 applicants in its second year.
- **Preparedness Mini-Grant Program**  
IPERLC offered a program to provide small grants to support Illinois organizations in their efforts to improve emergency response capabilities and organizational capacity to respond to man-made and natural disasters. Eligible organizations included local health departments, primary care clinics and community-based organizations such as non-profits, faith-based, and schools. Funded projects would include education and training activities or learning products that would impact on the ability of the public health workforce and/or community-based organizations to respond to the preparedness needs of their target populations in the state of Illinois. A total of 13 organizations (10 health departments, two primary care clinics and one faith-based organization) received funding for six-month projects. These projects will be evaluated and learning products and lessons learned will be shared.
- **New Employee Emergency Preparedness Orientation**  
The Cook County Department of Public Health's (CCDPH) New Employee Emergency Preparedness Orientation (NEEPO) is not only an accessible, interactive, role-oriented online course, but it is also significantly cost-effective. The structure of the course goes beyond providing the theoretical framework of emergency preparedness and offers an applied approach using CCDPH-specific information. Furthermore, it offers an applied approach, using CCDPH-specific information, as well as localized case studies, scenarios, and practice-related activities. The orientation concludes with "Choose-Your-Own-Adventure: TB on the Streets", an interactive simulation based on real life events. It challenges participants to decide how CCDPH should proceed through each stage of the scenario by applying knowledge from the course. CCDPH employees appreciate the hands-on approach of the revamped NEEPO course and have found this a beneficial representation of emergency preparedness concepts.
- **Faith and the Public Health Leadership Institute**  
As a result of discussions with partner health departments and representatives of faith-based organizations, IPERLC, in collaboration with the HRSA-funded Training Center, developed The Institute for Faith and Public Health Leadership. The Institute consists of a five-session series that addresses several preparedness issues. It aims to strengthen the partnerships between faith and public health leaders while equipping them to work together more effectively to improve the health of communities and to better prepare communities to endure and recover from public health emergencies.

### Contact Information

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### CDC Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Centers (PERLC)

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