

Building a statewide online threat preparedness course for West Virginia: A collaborative partnership

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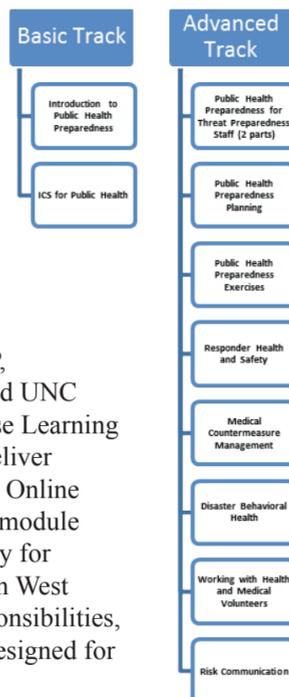
Background

In West Virginia, designated threat preparedness staff at the regional and local level are tasked with ensuring that their organizations plan and respond appropriately to a wide variety of public health emergencies. As new staff come into threat preparedness positions they need training in their essential roles and responsibilities. Staff at the West Virginia Center for Threat Preparedness (WV CTP) typically conducted such trainings as 1 or 2-day face-to-face orientation sessions.

Recognizing that these training sessions were very resource-intensive for state and local staff and that they did not provide enough time to cover all topics in the depth necessary, WV CTP staff consulted with the University of North Carolina Center for Public Health Preparedness (UNC CPHP) to develop an online training course to provide a basic overview of core preparedness concepts and West Virginia-specific information for new threat preparedness staff. The intent of the course was not to replace face-to-face orientation sessions with state preparedness staff, but to allow such time to be spent more productively on higher-level issues. In addition, course materials could also serve as refresher trainings on specific topics as needed.

In 2010-12, WV CTP and UNC CPHP, through the support of the CDC-funded UNC Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center, collaborated to develop and deliver the West Virginia Threat Preparedness Online Training Course. The course has an 8-module “advanced track,” designed specifically for regional and local public health staff in West Virginia with threat preparedness responsibilities, as well as a 2-module “basic track,” designed for general local health department staff.

West Virginia Threat Preparedness Online Training Course Modules



Course Development

Initial steps in the collaborative process included establishing partners’ roles and responsibilities, consensus on project timeline, ensuring input from the target audience, and deciding technical options for course development, delivery, and hosting.

Partners agreed on a 5-phase process for developing the modules.

Training module development: Five phase process

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNC CPHP-- Develop topics, objectives, and outline • WV CTP* -- Review topics, objectives, and outline, provide feedback within agreed-upon timeframe (10 days) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNC CPHP-- Design draft PowerPoint slides with notes/script • WV CTP* -- Review draft PowerPoint slides with notes (Brainstorm: activity resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNC CPHP-- Finalize PowerPoint slides, accompanying audio scripts, and interactive features • WV CTP*-- Review final PowerPoint slides, final scripts, interactive features, and resource lists • Pilot materials with target audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNC CPHP-- Incorporate feedback from piloting, polish slides/script, record audio, and transfer to e-learning software program • WV CTP -- Review recorded and polished lecture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNC CPHP-- Post module online • WV CTP-- Notify LHD staff that a new training course is available

*Depending on module topic, feedback from other WV SMEs and/or target audience members was incorporated into this process

The course was developed using Articulate® e-learning software to allow for incorporation of interactive features for learners.

Each module was built around clearly-stated learning objectives and was mapped to Public Health Preparedness and Response Core Competencies and Public Health Preparedness Capabilities.

Example of module learning objectives

Public Health Preparedness Planning (Advanced Track, Module 2)

- Describe types of emergency plans that should exist at local health departments
- Describe the strategic planning process outlined in the Public Health Preparedness Capabilities Planning Model
- List strategies for effective planning
- Discuss elements of National Incident Management System (NIMS)-compliant plans
- Identify barriers to effective planning and strategies to address those barriers

Example of capability and competency mapping

Public Health Preparedness Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute expertise to the development of emergency plans (PHP&R Core Competency 3.2) • Participate in improving the organization's capacities (including, but not limited to programs, plans, policies, laws, and workforce training). (PHP&R Core Competency 3.3) • Community Preparedness (PHEP Capability 1)
Advanced Track, Module 2	

Course Delivery

The course is available on the UNC CPHP Training Web Site, a learning management system hosted by UNC CPHP. Participants complete each self-paced course module independently. Each module is accompanied by pre-/post-tests to measure knowledge gain, as well as a post-training evaluation. West Virginia’s state affiliate site of the TRAIN (TrainingFinder Real-time Affiliated Integrated Network) learning management system serves as the portal to the trainings, allowing state-level staff in West Virginia to track training completions. All modules offer continuing education credit.

Evaluation

While the majority of the modules were posted in late 2012 and do not yet have enough participant completions to reliably analyze evaluation data, 3 trainings posted earlier in 2012 have had enough participant completions to look at results of post-training evaluations.

Evaluation results (May 2012–February 2013) for Module 1 Basic Track and Module 1 Advanced Track

Module Titles (total # of completions)	Introduction to Public Health Preparedness Basic Track, Module 1 (n=30)	Public Health Preparedness for Threat Preparedness Staff: Part I Advanced Track, Module 1.1 (n=27)	Public Health Preparedness for Threat Preparedness Staff: Part II Advanced Track, Module 1.2 (n=18)
# (%) of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed with the statements:			
The training enhanced knowledge of the subject matter	27 (90%)	26 (96%)	17 (94%)
The training was relevant to what I might be expected to do to (prevent, prepare for, or respond to) an emergency	27 (90%)	24 (89%)	16 (89%)
I would recommend the training to others	27 (90%)	24 (89%)	17 (94%)

Participants were also asked if they intended to apply the new skills/information to their job activities and how frequently they intended to apply what they had learned. For all 3 trainings, at least half of respondents (70%, 74%, 50%) said that they intended to apply what they had learned to their jobs, while a high percentage (50%, 74%, 67%) expressed intent to use what they had learned weekly or daily.

These evaluation data suggest that, at least for these initial modules, the trainings are meeting the intent of providing highly-applicable, relevant information to local and regional threat preparedness staff in West Virginia.

Lessons Learned

- Close collaboration between academic and practice partners was the single strongest factor for success of the project, although it necessitated a significant commitment of resources (e.g., time) on the part of West Virginia state-level staff.
- Academic partners needed to be flexible concerning completion of various tasks as state partners engaged in large-scale response activities at various times in the project (e.g., 2012 *derecho*).
- Use of e-learning software produced a higher-quality product for learners, but involved more staff time for development.
- Changing federal guidance (e.g., HSEEP) made finalizing some modules challenging.

Next Steps

- The West Virginia Threat Preparedness Center will incorporate the course as part of orientation activities for new local and regional level staff, and will promote use of the course modules as refresher trainings.
- UNC CPHP will build on this successful model to adapt various course modules for use in North Carolina, and will launch a version of the course for a national audience.

UNC CPHP

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