

CDC Responses for the Senate HELP Roundtable - One-Page Summary

Situational Awareness: Situational awareness encompasses many different aspects, including timely reporting, communicating with all involved agencies, organizations, and individuals, and ensuring interoperable systems are available to enhance communications and reporting capabilities.

BioSense is a national program intended to improve the nation's capabilities for disease detection, monitoring, and real-time situational awareness through access to existing data from healthcare organizations across the country. The BioSense application is a CDC-developed and hosted web-based system for use by healthcare facilities and state and local public health partners. The surveillance methods in BioSense address the need for identification, tracking, and management of rapidly spreading naturally occurring events and potential bioterrorism events using advanced algorithms for data analysis.

CDC's Global Disease Detection (GDD) program will protect U.S. citizens and citizens of the world from emerging diseases or terrorist threats. Where countries are not prepared for a major outbreak, efficient and effective interventions must be deployed to slow down, or contain, an emerging health threat. A key defense is to establish surveillance, epidemiological, and laboratory systems in strategic overseas locations to quickly detect outbreaks and minimize spread at the source.

Workforce Development: CDC emphasizes "all-hazards" preparedness. Workforce development activities for public health preparedness are quite comprehensive and encompass many issues, including: mental health preparedness and resiliency, the National Incident Management System, disease investigation and reporting, weapons of mass destruction, and risk communication. Utilizing this comprehensive approach ensures that public health professionals trained in preparedness activities have a set core of skills that can be utilized for effective response to any event, natural or terrorism-related. The public health response to SARS in 2003 is an actual example of how public health utilized preparedness and emergency response components/elements during a naturally occurring event.

Public Health Systems Research: Preparedness is a relatively new public health discipline, compared to diseases that are centuries old. Multi-disciplinary research methods that are entirely consistent with how public health has functioned in traditional areas of disease and injury control and health promotion are needed. The traditional public health model has focused on 4 areas: defining the problem (surveillance); establishing/identifying risk/protective factors (investigation); designing prevention and control strategies (environmental, medical, and behavioral interventions), and; disseminating and evaluating those strategies to maximize impact. This model is sound, but the investment takes long-term vision and commitment for success.

CDC is committed to furthering science and best practice regarding all-hazards preparedness.