

Local Health Department & Community
Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Planning
Experiences for the AMA-CDC National Congress

“EDS Education Day for the Cape & Islands”

Submitted by:
Amy L. Wallace, MRP
Emergency Preparedness Project Assistant
Barnstable County Department of Health & Environment



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1) CATEGORY

Community Education and Communication
Community Mitigation Strategies
Business Community and Private Sector Involvement

2) COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

a) Describe Your Community:

Barnstable County is a county located in the state of Massachusetts that includes and is mostly comprised of Cape Cod. The most recent estimated population is 228,683 year-round residents. When the popular summer tourist season arrives, many town populations more than double their year round totals. For example, the town of Barnstable is the largest town on Cape Cod. It consists of seven villages and has a year-round population of approximately 45,000 that rises to 140,000 for the summer season of May – August. According to the U.S. Census Bureau of 2001, the county has a total area of 1,306 square miles. 396 square miles of this is land and 910 square miles is water. Retail trade, services and government work comprise 70% of the employment in the county. The density growth rate of Barnstable County is three times that of the State of Massachusetts. The Cape added an estimated 12 persons per square mile from 2000 to 2001, triple the four persons added per square mile across the state. Barnstable County's population density averaged 573 persons per square mile in 2001, up from 32 persons per square mile in 1930. Thus the Cape's population density has increased by 602.1% over seven decades. This increase does not account for the significant summer population fluctuations. The Census Bureau of 2001 also ranked Barnstable County highest in the state for the percentage of people age 65 or older (23.1%). (Source: US Census Bureau, 2001)

b) State Public Health Infrastructure:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is dedicated to serving all the people in the Commonwealth, particularly the underserved, and to promote healthy people, healthy families, healthy communities and healthy environments through compassionate care, education and prevention. MDPH is mandated by state law to "maintain, protect, and improve the health and well being of the people." To do this, MDPH is divided into a central office in Boston, five district health offices and four public health hospitals located throughout the state, and the State Laboratory Institute. Major health related offices within MDPH are: Family and Community Health, Center for Emergency Preparedness, Substance Abuse Services, HIV/AIDS, Environmental Health, Communicable Diseases, Multicultural Health, Health Statistics, Hospitals, and Health Quality Systems. Several management, planning, and legal affairs offices are also a part of this organization. A number of toll-free numbers for Massachusetts are operated by programs within this department. MDPH also offers many publications (handbooks, fact sheets, special reports) on health-related issues, distributed by the Information and Education Division. (Source: MDPH official website, 2007)

b) (continued) Local Public Health Infrastructure:

Established under a Special Act of the State Legislature in 1926, the Barnstable County Department of Health & Environment (BCDHE) provides public health and environmental services in support of the existing local Health Departments of the 15 towns in Barnstable County, encompassing all of Cape Cod. The overall mission of BCDHE is to protect public health as well as to promote the physical, mental and social well being of the residents of Barnstable County. The Department Mission is pursued primarily through the various programs of the Department; these include Public Health Administration, Environmental Health, the Water Quality Testing Laboratory, the Septic Testing Center, Public Health Nursing Program, Emergency Preparedness, Community Septic Management Loan Program, and the Cape Cod Regional Tobacco Control Program.

In late 2004, a Coalition of Health Agents representing BCDHE, all 15 towns on Cape Cod and the 8 towns on the Islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, began efforts to ready these towns to receive the assets of the Strategic National Stockpile of pharmaceuticals. To access these assets in times of public health emergencies, primarily an influenza pandemic, each town/island has established Emergency Dispensing Sites (EDS), alternately known as Points of Distribution (PODS). Recent town flu clinics have been exercised as EDS. These exercises have shown the average throughput at a typical POD to be 250-300 people per hour. Mandated planning requires these sites to be ready for activation within 24 hours of notification, and inoculate/treat the entire population of a town within 48 hours after opening the dispensing site. This process has facilitated unprecedented coordination among various agencies, facilities, community groups, as well as the recruitment of volunteers with a wide variety of skills and responsibilities. Non-traditional coordination of resources and volunteers is necessary to supplement the many traditional sources of support, such as fire departments, EMS, police departments and hospital medical staff. Using valuable medical, health, and community service agencies, BCDHE continues to assess all available resources and facilitate work on written plans for each town on Cape Cod and the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

Each dispensing site requires logistical support staff to, at a minimum, greet individuals, take/provide information, direct human/vehicle traffic, and otherwise assist the public at the treatment site, as well as medical staff to administer treatment. The goal of this cooperative endeavor is to provide the necessary response in which we will stand the best chance of providing for the health and safety of the residents of Barnstable County during a pandemic emergency.

c) Current Healthcare Delivery System on Cape Cod:

Number of Hospitals: 2

Number of Level 1 Trauma Centers: 0

Number of Pediatric Trauma Centers: 0

Number of Adult/Pediatric Burn Centers: 0

Number of ICU Beds: Falmouth Hospital in Falmouth, MA has 10. Cape Cod Hospital in Hyannis, MA has 25.

Number of Long Care Health Facilities: 18

Number of Mental Health Intake Centers: 0

Number of Mental Health Inpatient Beds: Falmouth Hospital has 0. Cape Cod Hospital has 2-5 Beds.

3) PLANNING PROCESS – “EDS Education Day for the Cape & Islands”

a) How has your planning process been organized and coordinated?

Previous community event planning experience has demonstrated that the larger the *planning teams*, the more you can accomplish and the greater the success. I wanted to implement a method that would organize and divide up our event planning team members into areas of their interest/choosing. I researched and located a planning guideline template and adapted it to our community education event. I summarized the main planning points of the guidelines into a PowerPoint presentation for the REDS committee (see section b) and initiated the Planning Team sign ups. These Planning Teams were then empowered to make decisions for their part of the event (e.g. the Education Subcommittee would have the discretion to choose course subject matter, instructors, and organize credits for each course). Ongoing REDS meetings included brainstorming sessions that led to the Planning Teams making cohesive decisions for the event. As the event planning momentum went forward, Planning Team members reached out to numerous colleagues and community groups to help coordinate things such as staffing the event, moderating courses, displaying information, and even attending educational sessions.

b) Describe the community members involved in your process.

The Regional Emergency Dispensing Sites (REDS) committee, based out of Barnstable County Department of Health & Environment, is a planning and information sharing group whose primary interest is emergency preparedness for pandemic influenza. This committee has been meeting on a regular basis since January, 2005 and has community-wide representation consisting of the following:

Local/State Government: Health departments, police and fire/EMS departments who would primarily direct the disaster response on Cape Cod in coordination with the Commonwealth (Mass Dept. of Public Health).

Non-profits: Cape Cod Community College Facilities and Health Services, and Cape Cod Disability Access Directory who would assist with logistics, volunteers and information in their respective towns.

Disaster assistance agencies: Cape Cod Chapter of the American Red Cross, Upper Cape & Cape Cod Medical Reserve Corps, Elder Services of Cape Cod, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPs), and AmeriCorps Cape Cod who would assist with staffing and running each town's EDS in response to a pandemic.

Hospitals/health care: Cape Cod Hospital, Falmouth Hospital, Rehabilitation Hospital of the Cape & Islands, and Mid-Upper Cape Community Health, Visiting Nurse Association of Cape Cod, school nurses, and Parish Nurses of Cape Cod whose response work would be supported by the proactive Infectious Disease Response Plans (IDEP) for each town. These proactive documents are facilitated, in part, by the REDS committee.

At the present time, preparedness planning issues concerning pandemic influenza and disease outbreaks continue to be identified and addressed by the REDS committee.

The community members listed above still participate in emergency response planning for local public health and the health care delivery system.

c) What specific barriers to joint planning did you face/how did you overcome them?

Because of the pre-existing familiarity and planning cooperation of the REDS committee, there were few significant barriers to the joint planning process for this community education event. Joint communication and planning was taking place on a number of complicated pandemic issues during the previous year. Planning a community education event together was tackled with enthusiasm and seen by the REDS committee members as a reprieve from the numerous convoluted issues of EDS planning! If I could identify a barrier to planning this event, I would say it was that a few

members were tempted to not only do their assigned task, but initiate work on other people's tasks. When this occurred, the planning teams were reminded to only do the work assigned to their specific team.

d) Problems or issues identified as gaps/strategy to close the gap.

The REDS committee identified a need for an additional service group to be involved in the event planning process in order to address accessibility for those with special needs/disabilities. At the time, there was no central database or agency that coordinated all the different service groups on Cape Cod. It took some time to identify a representative or service group that was working on this important subject. Through our colleagues in different disciplines, we found representation from the coordinator for the Cape Cod Disability Access Directory. We asked her to attend REDS meetings and initiated presentations on related subjects so we could all better understand the special needs of Cape Cod. We then were able to incorporate emergency planning and community education at our event for this group.

4) NARRATIVE:

a) EDS: A Priority in Our Community

Public health emergency planning for pandemic influenza was mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2004 through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). Shortly after this, the director for Barnstable County Department of Health & Environment (BCDHE) prioritized the initial “deliverables” that had been ordered through a grant by the Commonwealth for implementation at the local government level and presented these to the Health Agents Coalition of the Cape & Islands. These public health directors and agents represent BCDHE, all 15 towns on Cape Cod and the 8 towns on the Islands of Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket. The initial goal of EDS planning was established: begin efforts to ready all the towns to receive the assets of the Strategic National Stockpile of pharmaceuticals. To access these assets in times of public health emergencies, primarily an influenza pandemic, each town/island had to officially identify their Emergency Dispensing Sites (EDS) to MDPH. This was only the beginning of influenza pandemic planning for our community.

b) Our Innovative Approach to Finding EDS Volunteers – Hold a Public Education Event!

Numerous and complicated planning issues emerged at this time. What sites would be large enough to inoculate all the residents in each town? What if there is a pandemic emergency during the summer tourist season – how will the towns vaccinate double or even triple their populations? While addressing these and many other issues over time, relationships in emergency planning were formed between agencies that had rarely communicated during a public health emergency, let alone to *plan for* a public health emergency in advance. But as each complex emergency planning issue was discussed or resolved, one problem was not progressing past the question/discussion phase. It was clear to the members of the Regional Emergency Dispensing Sites (REDS) committee that *the foundation for successful implementation of an EDS was staffing*. This led to a significant quagmire: “Where will we find the necessary and qualified people to deploy, staff and run each town’s EDS?” Each dispensing site requires significant logistical support staff to greet individuals, direct traffic, take information and otherwise assist the public at the treatment site, as well as medical staff to administer treatment. Because of this critical need for volunteers, the overall influenza pandemic planning process required additional coordination of resources to recruit volunteers in order to supplement the many traditional sources of support, such as fire departments, police departments and hospital medical staff.

I knew it was necessary to communicate this need to the community on Cape Cod. REDS was the platform I chose to initiate a large scale educational event on Cape Cod entitled: “EDS Education Day for the Cape & Islands.” The professional relationships that had been built through REDS meetings enabled us to reach out to several organizations in this region that could help address our event planning needs in terms of facilitation, course instructors and volunteer workforce. REDS worked together in a resourceful and creative way to utilize this event as an opportunity to advertise our need for EDS volunteers to the community. Through the efforts of the Planning Teams, we had the organized membership base to reach out to Cape Cod and the Islands with information and education about our emergency planning process. The slogan of this event was intended to empower the residents of Cape Cod to “Learn, Volunteer and Prepare!”

We would reach our goal of volunteer recruitment for emergency readiness in an infectious disease outbreak or influenza pandemic by:

- Providing information and educational sessions to teach the important basics of public health emergency preparedness for an influenza pandemic.

- Recruit volunteers for each town's EDS.
- Empower these volunteers to prepare their homes, families and their communities for any type of pandemic emergency.

For the first time, through this type of a public education event, we could bring the community together to begin to question, discuss and understand the plans on Cape Cod and the Islands for an influenza pandemic emergency. Previously, public education efforts for emergency planning had been initiated by an emergency management agency or local fire department and focused on a target audience (i.e. homeowners). These events were not large in scale and dealt with specific disaster subjects such as weather, or fire prevention, etc. We, on the other hand, were bringing diverse groups from the public with us into a new age of addressing our level of readiness as agencies and a community in the event of a public health crisis. The effects of this type of disaster reach beyond the homeowner - they can permanently affect the business owner, town administration and maintenance, service industries, long term care facilities and our school systems. Our approach to communicating with the public about this type of disaster scenario was ideal because now a large scale public education event was facilitated by *Public Health* to address emergency preparedness planning for *public health*.

At this time, numerous stories were being printed and broadcast in the media about Avian Flu. We responded to this as well by inviting the community at large to attend a full day of classes about EDS and pandemic emergency preparedness, as well as to visit our education booths. Providing information and discussing the complicated planning issues we were dealing with was meant to strengthen community knowledge, eliminate rumors proliferating from national media coverage, and proactively address panic. This event allowed us to focus our planning energy in a proactive, informative and practical manner. My hope was to ultimately plan and implement this event each year as an annual educational conference for the community on Cape Cod that would feature different public health emergency planning concepts.

c) Outcomes Achieved Through This Approach & Documentation

One of the Planning Teams for "EDS Education Day for the Cape & Islands", the "Follow Up Subcommittee", coordinated all event evaluations and presented their findings (which are documented in MS Excel, Word and PowerPoint) to REDS shortly after the event. EDS volunteer registration forms were processed by the Registration Subcommittee at the event. 45 people worked this event and 317 people attended education sessions. 51 attendees filled out a registration form to become EDS Volunteers for their towns. 50 separate attendees were already registered volunteers in a disaster response agency and attended this event for additional training. The majority of attendees confirmed that the education sessions provided a better understanding of public health emergency preparedness. The most popular workshops offered at the event were "Avian Flu Pandemic", "Dispensing Site Information", "Family Emergency Planning", and "Behavioral Health." We learned from course evaluations that the attendees wanted more information on how they would be contacted in an emergency and that they needed more specific hands-on training. Attendees encouraged the towns to send information about EDS planning efforts and emergency preparedness to all residents. Towns were also asked to have trainings at their EDS sites, which might "help get people to volunteer." Since the event took place, the Medical Reserve Corps has absorbed the tasks of volunteer education, addressing deployment/communication issues and provides further training sessions for EDS volunteers who signed up at "Education Day." Towns on Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard have held tabletop, functional and live drills in the past year to test their EDS plans and further engage their community members to volunteer. Finally, this educational event is being planned and

implemented by REDS once again this spring and the public health emergency preparedness topics are aimed at families, K-12 children, senior citizens and pet owners.

d) Unique or Particularly Successful Partnerships that Contributed to Our Success

Three types of partnerships occurred in developing this large event. The first is the event Planning Teams. We were a core group that started out with a common goal of working on pandemic planning issues for the Cape & Islands through REDS. We progressed as a team to the next level by taking our influenza pandemic information to the community, involving them, empowering them, and in return, empowering the work of the REDS committee. The willingness and hard work of our different agencies working together as Planning Teams provided outstanding results in terms of the event's course instructors, the volunteers working the booths, the volunteers registering new EDS volunteers and the college staff keeping the event moving forward without problems or delays. The partnerships before and at the event made it a truly cohesive, smooth and memorable success. The event that we planned, implemented and evaluated together, as Planning Teams, strengthened this same core group of REDS members as a committee with an even more important cause – training/preparing the volunteers we had recruited. We have continued with our planning meetings and are currently planning our second annual education event for the community, "Family Emergency Education Day" at Cape Cod Community College on Saturday, April 28, 2007.

The second type of partnership that contributed to our success at "EDS Education Day" was with the local businesses. We reached out to businesses that we thought could help support the event with donations of refreshments, raffle prizes, or by just simply posting our event flyer in their stores. Cape Cod does indeed have an incredibly generous business community! Enough baked goods, fruit, energy bars, water, coffee, juice and soft drinks were donated to feed all the event volunteers and the 350 event attendees for the day. The leftover beverages and food were donated in turn to Cape Cod Community College, where the event took place, for their incoming freshmen attending an orientation the following Monday. Local businesses also donated raffle prizes of disaster kits and gift cards to purchase disaster kit supplies. One local radio station provided free promotion and set up a booth at the event and covered it live for the day. Through our planning process, we were able to get to know some of these community business owners/managers and many of the same businesses are helping us again this year for "Family Emergency Education Day."

The third unique partnership that developed and continues to exist is between Cape Cod Community College (CCCC) and Barnstable County Department of Health & Environment (BCDHE). The Directors of Facilities and Health Services from CCCC have attended REDS meetings from the beginning. The support from these two representatives has been outstanding. They were the main planning partners with our department who initiated using the centrally located college for this event at no charge to BCDHE. This was an incredibly generous act, considering some costs to rent the college facilities can be upwards of \$15,000.00. BCDHE is not a large health department and neither is our budget. The fact that these two college departments became committed to our event planning goals was extraordinary. CCCC has continued their strong involvement and support in local public health emergency planning as part of their institution's goal to work and serve in the community they are based in. CCCC Facilities also secured the college facilities/buildings at no charge for our 2007 public education event, "Family Emergency Education Day." The relationship between BCDHE

and CCCC continues to be professionally rewarding and very productive, as well as a supreme benefit to the community that both organizations serve.

e) Advice for Other Planners

The tools for communicating to your community about planning needs for pandemic influenza emergencies are communication, relationship building, tangible goals, teamwork, organized implementation and acknowledging a project/program's success as a group. Selecting project partners with common goals and working on the project in teams with different responsibilities helps people feel included and that their input is helping to shape the project. Project Planning Teams also improve communication with the public, interagency relations, and develop equal ownership of the project. The more people involved on a consistent, organized basis, the more meaningful the partnership, and the project, will become. Meaningful partnerships are viewed with affirmative thoughts, resulting in affirmative actions. For example, the meaningful work relationships formed during last year's "EDS Education Day for the Cape & Islands" has resulted in many discussions and presentations referring to this positive experience and the excellent contribution it has made to staffing EDS locations on Cape Cod. What once seemed like an impossible task is now an ongoing program with an attainable goal: volunteers for each town's dispensing site(s). This experience has motivated this same group of planners to take their time and energy to plan another event this year.

Suggestions for effective partnerships include:

- Seek out diversity and contact groups that are not highly visible.
- Contact groups representing people with disabilities.
- Planning partners can include schools/colleges, businesses, government entities, neighborhood associations, faith/religious communities, college students, minority groups, retirees, teachers and principals, the media, and professional clubs or associations.

5) CONTACT INFORMATION:

Team members that would participate if selected to present at the AMA/CDC Congress on Health Systems Readiness:

1. Amy L. Wallace, MRP
Emergency Preparedness Project Assistant
Barnstable County Dept. of Health & Environment
P.O. Box 427/3195 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630
Phone: 508-375-6908 Email: amy@cape.com
2. Lee A. McConnell
Environmental Project Assistant
Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment
P.O. Box 427/3195 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630
Phone: 508-375-6620 Email: mcconnel@cape.com
2. John T. Lebica, Director
Facilities Management
Cape Cod Community College
2240 Iyanough Road
West Barnstable, MA 02668-1599
Phone: 508-362-2131, Ext. 4177
Email: jlebica@capecod.edu
3. Eileen O'Keefe
Project Coordinator/Emergency Services
Falmouth Hospital
100 Ter Heun Drive
Falmouth, MA 02540
Phone: 508-495-7137 Email: eokeyffe@capecodhealth.org