

Module 2 - Public Health Preparedness

Objectives

- Define a public health emergency
- List examples of types of public health events and emergencies

Overview

Protecting the public from health threats involves *public health preparedness* as well as *medical preparedness*. Both are essential for national health security and, hence, to the overall preparedness of the nation.

- **Public health preparedness** is the ability of the *public health system, community, and individuals* to prevent, protect against, quickly respond to, and recover from health emergencies, particularly those in which scale, timing, or unpredictability threatens to overwhelm routine capabilities.
- **Medical preparedness** is the ability of the *health care system* to prevent, protect against, quickly respond to, and recover from health emergencies, particularly those whose scale, timing, or unpredictability threatens to overwhelm routine capabilities.

Public health threats can take many forms. They can result from a natural phenomenon such as a hurricane or tsunami, or they can be caused by human acts such as a large accident or terrorist event. Regardless of their origin, all public health emergencies have certain similar basic medical and public health consequences. However, the degree to which the emergency may impact the medical and public health infrastructure of a community or region may vary. Additionally, you may be called to serve during other public health events such as a flu pandemic, disease outbreak, or other community health related events.

The core of Massachusetts' public health emergency response is comprised of an indispensable group of volunteers willing to offer their time and experience during times of crisis. Everyone who is involved in planning and responding to a emergency, from the medical personnel on the front lines to the non-health professional volunteers, plays an important role and can have a major impact on helping victims and their families.



