NACCHO’s Partnership with Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Centers

By Megan Skupien, Editorial Associate, NACCHO

Note: Anne Drabczyk, Ph.D., Program Manager of the APC Program, contributed to this article.

NACCHO’s Advanced Practice Centers (APCs) and the nine universities identified as Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Centers (PERRCs), are working together to develop ongoing partnerships that will further advance the field of public health. PERRCs are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct research on the Institute of Medicine’s 13 identified priorities on issues related to communications and media with early warning; vulnerable populations; and other public health related topics.

The APC Program is funded by NACCHO through a cooperative agreement with the CDC. The local health departments (LHDs) of the APC Program are tasked with developing best-practice prototypes that enable LHDs to improve public health workforce all-hazards capacity and capability. The APCs are designing prototypes that will strengthen biosurveillance capacities; improve response capabilities to chemical and biological agents; develop stockpiling and distribution strategies; optimize medical surge capacity; improve strategies for outreach to vulnerable populations; and other public health related topics.

During the 2010 Public Health Systems and Systems Research Keeneland Conference in Lexington (KY), leaders met to discuss the many facets of public health systems. Attendees included representatives of the PERRC Workgroup and NACCHO. Anne L. Drabczyk, Ph.D., Program Manager of the APC Program at NACCHO, presented information to the PERRC Workgroup about the APC sites and how to connect emergent research with ongoing all-hazard prototype development. The potential resultant translation will enable LHDs to build capacity and capability to all-hazards. This discussion of opportunities for PERRCs and APCs to join forces, marked the preliminary steps for a future joint venture between the universities and health departments.

University of Pittsburgh and Tarrant County (TX) LHD

Currently, a few of NACCHO’s APC sites are already working with PERRCs. The Tarrant County (TX) LHD has been actively working with the University of Pittsburgh, a PERRC, to create effective models for emergencies. The collaboration began when the university started reviewing five state emergency systems. The university looks at state emergency systems from a legal point of view and questions scenarios such as: what is the mandate for all-hazards and what organizations would respond to an emergency? Pennsylvania was the first state to be analyzed—Texas is next.

Once Tarrant County LHD receives the real-time data from the University of Pittsburgh, it can then apply the information to their work with LHDs. It’s a perfect partnership for PERRCs and APC sites. Academic institutions provide the research and the
APC site then takes the research into the field—since the APC sites can’t do the research, they can take the research provided by the university and actually apply it to field work. The university benefits from this data being translated into the field. The partnership is a win-win situation for both the PERRC and the LHD. The relationship can be defined as the researcher to the practitioner.

**PERRC Profile Study**

The workgroup meeting concluded at the Keeneland Conference with NACCHO proposing the creation and dissemination of an electronic survey in the summer 2010. The survey will be sent to PERRCs to question the potential opportunities for APC sites to work with PERRCs, and how NACCHO could also develop partnerships with PERRCS. The purpose of the survey is to find an overlap or affinity of issues between the university and APC site. The survey will also include a retrospective review of the APC products by subject matter experts.

In the fall, another joint meeting will be held between the PERRCs and NACCHO to discuss the results from the survey and the next steps.

**For More Information**

For more information about NACCHO’s APC Program, contact Anne L. Drabczyk, Ph.D., Program Manager, at (202) 507-4221 or adrabczyk@naccho.org.