Response Efforts

In many emergency situations, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks among others, public health will be just one small part of the response effort. The larger response effort will usually involve local government, police and fire officials. The Norwood City Health Department has developed relationships with these groups, participating together in exercises and training to ensure that we are prepared to work together to respond to a variety of emergencies.

Public health's response to an emergency will involve several key steps:

- distributing medication
- education and communication
- enforcing rules and regulations
- surveillance and disease investigation
- helping our partners

Distributing Medication

In the event that an emergency requires distribution of vaccines or other medications to a large number of residents, the system to enable the rapid delivery of those medications to predetermined locations around Hamilton County would be activated.

Education and Communication

Many times during emergencies, public health officials will make recommendations to the general public or other organizations about how to stop or contain the emergency situation. This may be done through local media outlets, web sites, communication with our public health partners, or through the distribution of appropriate educational materials.

For example, during a disease outbreak, you may be reminded that hand washing and covering your cough are important steps we can all take to prevent the further spread of disease-causing germs.

Enforcing Rules and Regulations

During any emergency situation, the Norwood City Health Department staff will work with the community to carry out our mission of protecting the public health and environment. In some situations, however, special rules and regulations may need to be adopted to help public health officials carry out this mission. Similar to other public health agencies in Ohio and across the country, the Norwood City Board of Health has the authority to adopt rules which have the same status as law.

Surveillance and Disease Investigation

Every day, epidemiologists and communicable disease nurses monitor the health of our community and work to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses.

For example, through hospital and physician notifications, communicable disease nurses are notified when cases of diarrheal illnesses occur at area daycare centers. Once cases are identified, testing is done to determine the cause of the illness and steps are taken to prevent the further spread of illness among this highly vulnerable population. In most cases, communicable disease nurses work one-on-one with affected families and daycare providers to provide education and recommendations.

These efforts would continue during a disease epidemic or other public health emergency. Epidemiologists and communicable disease nurses have the tools and skills needed to track progression of a disease through a community, as well as the ability to make recommendations about public health interventions that could slow or stop its spread.

Helping Our Partners

Hospital partners are assisted by preparing for medical surge through the Alternative Care Center. The ACC is an integrated, self-sustaining field hospital that operates in unusual, extraordinary circumstances. The purpose of the ACC is to provide the existing healthcare infrastructure (hospitals) with physical resources to help minimize the effects of mass casualty emergencies.

The make-up of the ACC can be broken into three functional components: Supplies, Shelter and Staff. The entire tent system consists of seven wings, with three tents per wing and an additional command wing which consists of a command tent and supply tent.

The ACC was designed by a multidisciplinary team led by the Hamilton County General Health District. The funds to purchase the equipment and supplies for the ACC were awarded by the Homeland Security Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Grant program. These funds were awarded to Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati.