

OUTREACH SUBPANEL REPORT

To: Secure Commonwealth Panel
From: Gregory E. Lucyk, Chair, Outreach Subpanel
Date: July 15, 2009

The Outreach Subpanel of the Secure Commonwealth Panel has operated with three broad objectives to ensure that all citizens of the Commonwealth are fully informed of emergency preparedness efforts and initiatives. These three broad objectives include (1) promoting cross-agency and inter-agency coordination of outreach activities at the state and local level; (2) maximizing the assistance and resources provided to local governments by the state and its agencies to facilitate outreach activities at the local level; and (3) ensuring that special needs populations, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, and other diverse and underserved populations are integrated into all emergency planning and preparedness efforts and initiatives undertaken by state and local agencies. In furtherance of these objectives, the Outreach Subpanel has identified four major action items it believes the Secure Commonwealth Panel should pursue as part of its ongoing work plan:

1. Inter-agency Coordination - the Subpanel salutes the collaborative planning recently undertaken by the agencies of the Health and Human Services Secretariat, with focus primarily on improving emergency planning efforts for populations of need. A copy of the Secretariat's "Summary of Efforts" is attached to this report and is presented to the Secure Commonwealth Panel as an example of significant progress in furthering this broad objective. The Outreach Subpanel will continue to encourage collaboration between and among all state agencies and local government agencies in preparedness planning. We believe this "cross-agency" effort should be expanded to include those agencies in other Secretariats serving all populations of need,

including, but not limited to, the Secretary of Public Safety and the Secretary of Education.

2. Enhancing Resources and Support for Local Government efforts - the Subpanel has determined that facilitating communications and information sharing to and among local government officers and entities is a major priority in furthering the goal of maximizing assistance and resources for local governments in preparedness efforts. The Subpanel has received much positive feedback from the workshop it offered on "Emergency Preparedness for Special Needs Populations" at the Virginia Emergency Managers Conference on April 2nd in Hampton. This workshop proved to be a natural follow to one offered the previous year that introduced the Residential Facilities Emergency Plan Review Matrix. However, we also have been informed that there is an information vacuum on emergency preparedness among the higher offices in some local governments - including at the City Council and Board of Supervisors, and City and County Manager levels. The Subpanel has identified the Virginia Municipal League (VML) and the Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) as two organizations that the Commonwealth's state agencies must develop a stronger relationship with in order to enhance the state's partnership with local governments in furthering our preparedness efforts.

The Outreach Subpanel suggests exploring the following:

What preparedness training, if any, do VML and VACO offer to high level executive, legislative and administrative officials as part of their regular curriculum of programs?

Is there a mechanism by which state agencies can assist in providing training programs for VML and VACO members? *One recommendation is for VML or VACO to develop a standing committee for preparedness, to coordinate on a regular basis with state agencies for providing preparedness training programs.*

3. Post-Catastrophe Recovery - In the event of an emergency or catastrophic event, what do the victims of disaster do about housing, employment, and other life sustaining needs? In the case of a mass evacuation of residents, who will ensure that disaster victims have something to come back to? An adequate, timely recovery depends largely on the degree of pre-incident planning that has occurred. What secondary systems have been put in place to support local infrastructure and business, so that these entities can begin to function again shortly after the incident occurs? Unfortunately, occasions do arise where virtually everything in a town or city is destroyed. What services can be re-instituted in a neighboring locality? Can children who are in one school system be absorbed by surrounding school districts to maintain continuity of educational services and to ensure that grade advancement is not delayed? Also, while fraud cannot be eliminated in its entirety, how do we minimize widespread fraud or mismanagement in the provision of housing or financial assistance (e.g., the FEMA trailer scenario)? What can the Commonwealth and its agencies do to make sure that localities are resourced and prepared to address post-catastrophe recovery? Can READY VA play a role in disseminating information to localities and their residents on post-catastrophe measures? The Subpanel recommends that the Secure Commonwealth Panel should explore these issues and offer recommendations to the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness for consideration by the incoming Governor and Secretariats.

4. Sheltering - the Subpanel recommends that the Secure Commonwealth Panel and our state agency emergency planners should address the following: In the event of a disaster when sheltering is needed, how will the Commonwealth and its localities assist individuals who have specialized needs, such as nutrition or dietary issues, or who may need medication, but do not have prescription or dosage information? How can the shelter connect with the pharmacy or medical professionals who have the information on file? What guidelines, if any, are in place now, or need to be in place, to assist localities or private sheltering

facilities in addressing these concerns? Who are the decision makers? The Secure Commonwealth Panel will need to enlist the support of Health and Human Services, the Department of Emergency Management, public and private health care providers and others to explore these issues.

Additional Topic for Discussion

Education - the Subpanel believes that preparedness training in our schools should not be limited to students and faculty, but recommends that mid-level administrative personnel in the Commonwealth's schools, including custodial and cafeteria workers, should receive emergency preparedness training (the Outreach sub panel will defer to the Education sub panel on this matter).

The report below on Inter-agency coordination was submitted by Outreach Sub Panel member Dr. Mark Levine.

Health and Human Resources Agency Collaboration on Emergency Planning Summary of Efforts

June 2009

Background

To facilitate collaborative planning and response among the Health and Human Resources Secretariat, Secretary Tavenner recently designated the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) as the Secretariat Agency Coordinator for Emergency Preparedness and Response given the agency's roles as lead for ESF-8 and support for ESF-6. These efforts focus primarily on improving our emergency planning efforts with populations of need. It should be noted that VDH and its health districts do not have the resources to assume operational responsibility for implementing all aspects of such plans. Therefore, this effort focuses on facilitating the coordination of HHR agency emergency planning as it relates to the populations in question.

First Session

To date, VDH had convened HHR agency representatives on two occasions. Some key themes that were discussed initially included:

- Enhance participation from the communities of interest in the emergency planning process, including better representation at local and regional planning levels
- Focus on both short term actions and long term systematic improvements to help us avoid "recreating the wheel" each time an emergency occurs.
- Inventory our agency communication capabilities to create a coordinated approach to both outreach and collection of feedback from the groups in question.
- Seek funding opportunities through the DHS State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) to lower barriers to the recommended representation noted above.

Second Session

Our second session was a very productive meeting that included engagement with the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness (OCP) through Curtis Brown. Curtis informed

the group about the 7 regional planning advisory committees (RPAC) which are organized to help plan for appropriate use of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) emergency planning grant dollars. The group consensus was that the RPACs represented an excellent opportunity to enhance representation by key community stakeholders to better represent “all needs” in the community. Agencies will help identify potential representatives who can add critical perspective to our regional planning efforts.

There are many definitions of “at risk” or “vulnerable populations.” However, the group agreed that we evolve from a focus on “special needs” (considered a derogatory term by many) to one of planning for “**all needs.**” This is not unlike the evolution of emergency planning from a focus on specific events to one of “all hazards.” This approach does not ignore specific planning issues related to certain subpopulations within our community but rather makes the default emergency planning approach and perspective one of considering “all needs” at the outset of planning.

Additionally, the group will split into working subgroups to focus on the following two key issues:

- 1) Prioritization of recommendations for studies/reports previously completed**
 - a. There are a number of Virginia specific reports and studies that clearly elucidate critical recommendations around the issue of planning for all needs. Instead of reinventing the wheel, a smaller group will review the studies and prioritize those recommendations for which no action has been taken to date.

- 2) Communication capabilities**
 - b. All HHR agencies have some degree of ability to communicate with the populations in question or know of preexisting communication networks that could be utilized during emergencies for state, regional or local awareness. This group will collect information for all the agencies and format it in such a way that can be used by us or by the public safety community. In the process of identifying these capabilities, significant gaps or opportunities may come to light. A good example of the importance of this effort relates to the potential need to communicate with all community members about an H1N1 vaccine if and when one becomes available. It is critical that we have robust and redundant capabilities to communicate such messages.