

Hospital Staffing and Surge Capacity During An Emergency Event

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Despite inherent challenges in caring for vulnerable populations during an emergency, NAPH members are developing innovative surge capacity plans to ensure essential care for their communities in times of greatest need.

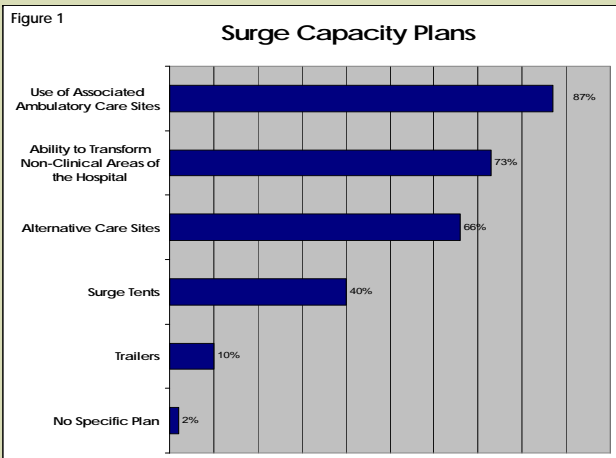
Learning Objective

Understand public hospitals' surge capacity plans and innovative techniques to ensure adequate staff coverage during emergencies.

Study Design

The NPHHI 2006-2007 Emergency Preparedness Study design includes a telephone survey consisting of 16 sections & 152 questions. The survey covered a range of topics from electronic medical records to personal protective equipment. These one-to-three hour long structured interviews were conducted with 60 NAPH member hospitals (i.e., public hospitals) between December 2006 and April 2007. NAPH member hospitals provide health care services for all patients, including the uninsured and underinsured, regardless of ability to pay. Located mostly in urban areas, NAPH member hospitals provide essential community-wide services, such as primary care, trauma care, and neonatal intensive care.

Principal Findings



Structural Surge Capacity Plans

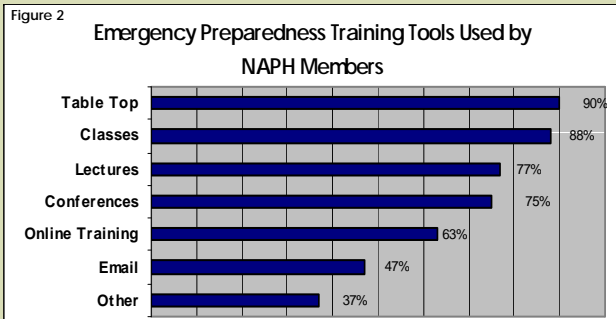
- NAPH members address the need for additional space in several ways (see Figure 1).
- 66 percent of NAPH members plan to use external alternative care sites such as schools, churches, or other community facilities in the case of a medical surge. A total of 63 percent report having both a cache of equipment and a staffing plan for these sites.

Credentialing Additional Health Care Professionals

- Nearly 92 percent of NAPH members report plans to credential outside volunteers during a disaster, including physicians (85 percent), nurses (78 percent), and pharmacists (68 percent).
- Hospitals also report the ability to identify and credential respiratory therapists, psychologists, and emergency medical technicians.

Training Staff

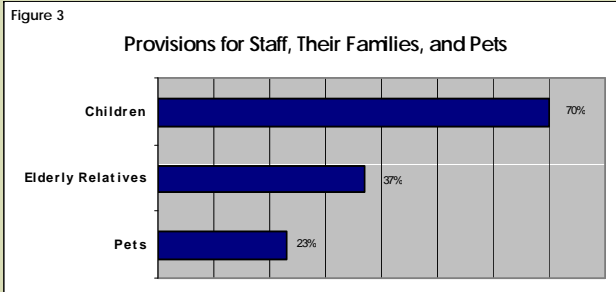
- Because disaster events are relatively rare, staff do not have regular experience with emergency equipment and protocol. Therefore, regular staff training is crucial to effective emergency response.
 - 57 percent of NAPH hospitals train staff upwards of three times annually.
 - The most common training method among NAPH members: "table top" exercises (91 percent) (see Figure 2).



Provisions for Staff

- The number of licensed (i.e., theoretically available) beds in NAPH hospitals exceeds the number of operational (i.e., staffed) beds by an average of 100 beds per facility.
- 55 percent of NAPH member hospitals have incentives/provisions in place to encourage health care workers to report to work in the event of a major infectious disease outbreak.
- More than 50 percent plan to provide essential medications to staff and their families.
- 70 percent of NAPH members will offer some combination of daycare, housing, and food for staffs' children (see Figure 3).

Conclusion



Adequate numbers of well-trained hospital workers affect the number of operational beds and, ultimately, the number of patients that can be cared for during an emergency. NAPH member hospitals use many strategies to ensure adequate staffing during an emergency, including daycare for employees' children, housing for their pets, and access to medication supplies for workers and their families. NAPH members have also developed plans to identify and credential volunteer staff and to train staff on emergency equipment and protocol. Despite inherent challenges in caring for vulnerable populations during an emergency, public hospitals are developing innovative disaster surge capacity plans to ensure essential care for their communities in times of greatest need.