

FACT SHEET: Cal PREPARE Project 4

PROJECT #4: CAL PREPARE EXERCISE LABORATORY (EXLAB): SYSTEMS RESEARCH USING STATEWIDE OPERATIONS-BASED EXERCISES

GOALS

- To identify high-priority, all-hazards research questions based on comprehensive evaluations and stakeholder priorities;
- To establish a collaborative operational framework to integrate high-priority, all-hazards research questions into the design, development, conduct, and evaluation of statewide and regional exercises;
- To conduct high-priority, all-hazards research field studies based on statewide and regional exercises and real-time public health emergencies; and
- To translate research findings into practical, real-world solutions that directly benefits California, and states and communities throughout the United States.

LEAD INVESTIGATOR

- **Tomás Aragón, MD, DrPH**, Principal Investigator, UC Berkeley School of Public Health, CIDER, aragon@berkeley.edu

CO-INVESTIGATORS

- **Michael Petrie, EMT-P, MBA, MA**, Project Manager, UC Berkeley School of Public Health, CIDER, mgpetrie@berkeley.edu
- **Jennifer Hunter, MPH**, DrPH Graduate Student Researcher, UC Berkeley School of Public Health, CIDER, jhunter@berkeley.edu

METHODS

- Aim 1:** Conducted systematic review of Golden Guardian and Statewide Medical and Health Exercises After Action Reports (AARs) from state agencies responsible for coordinating and evaluating these exercises.
- Aim 2:** Created and seated multi-disciplinary, 15-member EXLAB Research Steering Committee (RSC), consisting of California's public and private-sector, state and local health, medical, hospital, and emergency management leaders, who represent their organizations or their disciplines. (The membership of this committee is identified in Attachment A). The RSC provides practice-based advice to the EXLAB staff, assures the EXLAB' research priorities address the State's greatest public health and medical preparedness gaps, provides political support and advocacy for the EXLAB, and provides an executive-level route for practice translation. The EXLAB RSC has quarterly conference calls and annual meetings, and is frequently called upon by EXLAB staff for guidance.
- Aim 3:** Following November 2010 Health and Medical Exercise, surveyed exercise participants related to the following four primary domains: (1) Participation, (2) Transmission of hospital bed availability data, (3) Roles and responsibilities of organizations/agencies, and (4) Communications challenges. This web-based survey was sent to all Local Health Departments (n=61), Local Emergency Medical System Agencies (n=31), Hospitals (n=530), and Regional Disaster Medical and Health Coordinator/ Specialists (n=6).

IMPACT

The preparedness gap areas that the EXLAB is researching, *Communications and Information Sharing, Organizational Roles and Responsibilities, and Medical Surge*, are considered the preparedness gaps of greatest concern by the leaders of California's health, medical, and emergency management communities. EXLAB's research findings and practice translation will reduce critical capability gaps in these areas. Because California is a large and diverse state with urban, rural, and remote health and medical systems, EXLAB's research findings and translations will be generalizable to other local and state medical, public health, and emergency management preparedness efforts.

RESEARCH TRANSLATION

The EXLAB's research translation strategy has been developed with assistance from the 15-member, multidisciplinary EXLAB RSC, and has/will include the following methods:

- Research results will be vetted by and released through the EXLAB RSC. As this committee includes the leadership of California's public health, medical preparedness, and emergency management communities, there is a direct route into practice translation.
- The EXLAB has been asked by the California EMS Authority and the EMS Administrators Association to help design and conduct a preparedness survey of California's local EMS Agencies. Our preliminary research findings have informed this survey. The data collected during this survey will be used in future EXLAB research. The EXLAB is developing a "research infrastructure" which can support future research.
- The EXLAB will present its preliminary research findings at the NACCHO PHP Summit, the National UASI HLS Conference, and the EMS Administrators Association of California conference. EXLAB staff will continue to present research findings, at multi-disciplinary state and national conferences.
- EXLAB is represented the 2011 Health and Medical Exercise Committee. Results of EXLAB's 2010 research have informed and influenced 2011 exercise activities.
- California Public Health's EXLAB members attend and present at State and local public health and EMS Committees, including the California Council of Local Health Officers and the EMS Administrators Association of California.
- The EXLAB will disseminate and present these finding to a national audience through publications in academic and practice-based journals, web-based documents, and list serve mailings.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Aim 1: There is not a single repository for After Action Reports for either the Golden Guardian or Statewide Medical and Health Exercise. Each organization (e.g. LHD, LEMSA, hospital) maintains their own AAR. The EXLAB discussed the benefits of the developing a single repository for exercise AARs with the CalPREPARE Research Advisory Committee in December 2010. The systematic AAR review indicated that the most common preparedness gaps were in the following areas: 1) Communications and Information Management; 2) EOC Management; and, 3) Resources and Staffing.

Aim 2: The EXLAB Research Steering Committee (RSC) rated the following as the three greatest gaps in California's public health and medical preparedness system: 1) *Communications and Information Sharing*; 2) *Organizational Roles and Responsibility*; and, 3) *Medical Surge*. These priority research areas are consistent with the CalPREPARE Research Advisory Committee Focus Group, the Meta Leadership Conference's Government Focus Group, and an EXLAB survey of California's health and medical leaders.

Aim 3: Preliminary Research Findings

Survey respondents identified the following as their organization's most significant communication challenge during the exercise: (n=213)

- 57% Complete or partial failure of communications equipment/systems
- 21% Providing or maintaining situational awareness
- 11% Excessive communications workload
- 6% Inaccurate or unknown communications policy/guidance
- 2% Additional communications equipment/system training required
- 3% Other

Survey respondents identified the following challenges in inter-organizational communications or information sharing during the exercise: (n=159)

- 39% Information was not timely
- 28% Data systems capacity was insufficient
- 14% Received conflicting information
- 11% Received redundant requests
- 10% Information was not accurate
- 4% Information was not relevant
- 13% Other
- 16% Don't know/unable to answer