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## WHO HAS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT PUBLIC HEALTH NEEDS TO MANAGE?

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## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “KNOWLEDGE?”

*What we need to know in order to be  
successful in our work*

- Knowing as doing: *Skills*
  - Knowing as understanding: *Information*
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## SEEKING USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

- For which questions do we need answers in order to protect and improve the public’s health?
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## OBTAINING USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

- Identifying the questions that need to be answered
  - Finding the answers
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## UNDERUTILIZED SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

- People who are experiencing public health problems or who will be affected by public health actions
  - People who carry out public health actions
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## NEED FOR COMPLEMENTARY SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

- Limitations of our professional frame of reference
  - Unjustified assumptions
  - We don’t know what we don’t know
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## THE EXAMPLE OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- The public is the *object* of concern, but strategies and plans are being developed *without* the public's knowledge
- Is that a problem?

## REDEFINING READINESS

- Looking at emergency preparedness through the eyes of the public
- Research and local demonstrations
- [www.redefiningreadiness.net](http://www.redefiningreadiness.net)

## REDEFINING READINESS SCENARIOS

- Smallpox outbreak
- Dirty bomb explosion

## DIFFERENCES IN FOCUS

### *Planners*

- The danger of the emergency itself
- The strategy to mitigate that danger

### *The Public*

- All of the risks they face
- The best way to protect themselves and their dependents

## SMALLPOX VACCINE STRATEGY WON'T WORK

*Only 43% of Americans would go to a public vaccination site*

- Plans violate people's natural inclination toward protective isolation
- Plans do not protect 50 million Americans at risk from the vaccine

*CDC program: only 8.5% of targeted health care workers agreed to be vaccinated*

## SHELTER IN PLACE STRATEGY WON'T WORK

*Only 59% of Americans would stay inside the building they are in*

- Plans do not address serious risks they would face inside the building
- Plans do not address serious risks their dependents would face if they protected themselves by sheltering in place

### **A FUNDAMENTAL FLAW IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

- Planners are developing instructions for people to follow *without* finding out whether it is actually possible for them to do so or whether the instructions are even the most protective action for certain groups of people to take.

### **PLANNERS NEED THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE**

- Without hearing from the public directly, planners can't possibly be aware of the barriers and risks that make it difficult for people to protect themselves.
- Lacking this knowledge, planners are developing instructions that are not feasible or safe for many people to follow.

### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF PREPARING WITHOUT THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE**

- In 2004, the *Redefining Readiness* study predicted that large numbers of people would suffer and die unnecessarily if response strategies are not based on what people will actually face when a disaster strikes.
- In 2005, Hurricane Katrina proved that prediction to be correct.

### **HOW DO WE TAP INTO AND BENEFIT FROM THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE?**

- View community residents as a valuable and knowledgeable resource
- Give them opportunities to contribute what they know
- Use their knowledge, as well as professional expertise, as a basis for decision making and action

### **REDEFINING READINESS SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION PROCESS**

- Identifying needed participants
- Designing the discussion questions
- Making participation feasible
- Making participation comfortable
- Enabling people to express what really matters to them, clearly and specifically
- Producing a complete and accurate record of what participants say

### **IDENTIFYING NEEDED PARTICIPANTS**

- People who are experiencing problems directly or who will be affected by decisions and actions
- Emergency preparedness: representative of everyone who would need to be protected in an emergency (i.e., everyone who lives and works in the community)

## TRACKING PARTICIPATION

*Goal: to assure that members of all groups of needed participants have the opportunity to speak for themselves*

- Track sociodemographics with anonymous post-discussion questionnaires
- Continually compare characteristics of participants with census data and dimensions of diversity

## DESIGNING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Goal: to enable community residents to contribute what they know (that professionals don't know directly) about issues that matter to them*

- The purpose is **NOT** to educate people, find out what they don't know, get their opinions about policies or plans that have already been developed by experts, have them prioritize issues identified by others, or achieve consensus

## DESIGNING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS QUESTIONS

- Community residents care about protection, and they are the only ones who know what they and their family members would actually face trying to protect themselves in emergencies
- Use specific and realistic emergency scenarios
- Ask unconstraining questions that enable participants to explore the *problems* they would face trying to protect themselves and the kinds of *actions* that they and others in the community could take to address those problems

## MAKING PARTICIPATION FEASIBLE

- Get the word out to members of all groups (in languages and words they understand)
- Choose convenient times and places to hold the discussions
- Hold discussions in languages that people understand
- Provide transportation, food, and on-site child care

## MAKING PARTICIPATION COMFORTABLE

- Setting up the room
- Greeting participants
- Making them aware of their own expertise and the value of their ideas
- Creating a level playing field
- Adopting group agreements

## FACILITATING THE EXPRESSION OF CLEAR AND SPECIFIC IDEAS

*Goal: to enable participants to express exactly what they want to say in ways that everyone understands*

- Knowledge is in the *specifics* of people's ideas
- General comments, sound bites, and jargon are of limited value because they can be interpreted in many different ways
- Use clarifying questions to help participants articulate what they aren't saying out loud, but **NOT** to correct them, challenge them, or give them ideas

## PRODUCING AN ACCURATE AND COMPLETE DISCUSSION RECORD

- Using flip charts that everyone can see, write exactly what participants say once they have expressed their ideas as specifically as they can (*don't* record who said what)
- At the end of the discussion, give participants an opportunity to review and correct their written ideas
- Create an electronic record of the discussion, using the specific flip-chart wording that participants approved
- Provide all participants with a timely copy of the record of their discussion

## COMPLETING THE SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS

- Each two-hour discussion involves about ten people
- Continue holding discussions until: (1) a large number of people have been involved; (2) the demographics of participants closely matches those of the target population; and (3) no new issues are being identified
- *Redefining Readiness*: almost 2,000 people participated in over 200 discussions in four communities

## TRANSFORMING PARTICIPANTS' TACIT KNOWLEDGE INTO USEFUL EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE

- Provide participants, and the community as a whole, with a complete, accurate, and anonymous record of what everyone said (e.g., *Redefining Readiness* Illustrated Card Set)
- Prepare reports and practical tools based on that knowledge (e.g., Shelter-in-Place Report and Issue Sets)

## WITH THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE, WE CAN MAKE SHELTERING IN PLACE POSSIBLE

- The report identifies serious and unanticipated problems that currently make it neither feasible nor safe for many people to shelter in place
- The instructions that people and organizations are being given do NOT address these problems and sometimes make matters worse
- Solutions are possible, through a variety of approaches

## SHELTER-IN-PLACE ISSUE SETS

*Tailored questions to help people in households, work places, schools/youth programs, and government:*

- Anticipate critical protection issues that are within their purview to address
- Stimulate their thinking about contextually appropriate solutions

## THE BOTTOM LINE

*Obtaining the public's tacit knowledge and transforming it into useful, explicit knowledge:*

- Enables emergency planners to develop strategies that work
- Engages a broad array of people and organizations as part of the solution
- Protects many more people than would otherwise be possible