

Organizational Behavior - DSHS

Question: What role does the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) play during an emergency situation in the context of the National Response Framework?

Domains: Leadership and Organizational Management, Individual and Organizational Behavior

Method of Research/Model: Case study, National Response Framework

Overview:

Mission: To improve health and well-being in Texas by focusing on preventing disease, protecting health, and promoting healthy living.

The DSHS coordinated with the Department of Public Safety on a lateral level sits as part of the State Operations Center (SOC), the DSHS also sets up and coordinates the State Medical Operations Center (SMOC) as needed, and it is run concurrently with the SOC. The DSHS reports to the Governor and various state and federal agencies, including the CDC and the Department of Health and Human Services.

The DSHS holds agreements with various ambulance services in the state to assist in emergencies, agreements with the 7 state regions and 30 districts for emergency response. The DSHS also coordinates response with the 8 Emergency Medical Task Force Regions, the Medical Reserve Corps, the Texas Citizen Corps, and the Texas Disaster Volunteer Registry.

Texas has a standard emergency action plan and separate appendices to deal with possible disasters, command and control, and communication. The DSHS is the lead agency for pandemics, radiological emergencies and Bioterrorism attacks.

Depending on whether we are primary or secondary in the plan, we will have different tasks identified, but the standard action plan is the Prepare, Detect, Notify, Coordinate, Support, Respond, Recover and Remediate, and mitigate.

Findings:

Action Plan:

Primary Roles: Detect, Notify, Respond, Recover and Remediate

Secondary Roles: Prepare, Coordinate, Support, Mitigate

Lessons Learned:

Several lessons have been learned from previous disasters:

- Communicate tailored message through a variety of modalities including from “trusted” community members.
- Provide situational awareness early.
- Coordinate with animal health agencies.
- Scale plan to size/severity of the disaster.
- Address needs for undocumented immigrants and non-English speakers. Lack of trust is a bigger issue than language.
- Elderly with chronic disease and functional issues need shelf stable meals, special cots/mattresses, and access to prescription medications.
- Address disaster related mental health needs of older adults.