Houston/Harris County
Public Health Response to Hurricane Katrina

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Houston/Harris County

- 3.6 million residents
- 1728 square miles
- 1.2 million – 33% - uninsured
- Large and cohesive ethnic communities
- 349 miles from New Orleans to Houston
Houston/Harris County Medical Overview

- Two public health departments
- A public mental health authority
- Two medical schools
- A public hospital district

Existing Community Clinic Structure

- 8 City and 5 County clinics providing immunizations, prenatal and preventive health services
- 3 established Federally Qualified Health Centers
- 5 newly deemed (12/05) FQHCs
- 11 Harris County Hospital District community health centers
- Several other community clinics
**Houston/Harris County Medical Limitations**

Despite these resources:
- Limited primary care capacity
- Extremely constrained public behavioral healthcare capacity
- High ED utilization for primary care sensitive conditions
- Lack of coordination among providers

**The Challenges**

- Provide brief shelter for evacuees, then transition to community in two weeks
- Meet the great demand for needed medical care and resources
- Manage initial surge, then sustain
- Manage resources: people, supplies
- Monitor quality of spontaneous, unregulated shelters that arose
- Make it work: collaboration, publicity, flexibility
The Problem

An estimated 300,000 Katrina evacuees were initially directed through Houston

- Two large scale clinics established in Astrodome and Convention Center
- Staffed by Harris County Hospital District, two local medical schools and other hospitals

- An estimated 25,000 medical visits in initial weeks
  - How to transition that volume into community as large shelters closed

Targeting Key Clinics for Overflow

- Analysis of clinic capacity and capabilities to handle additional volume and rotating providers
- Early meeting with selected group of clinics to discuss their needs and our expectations
- Pairing up clinics with hospital partners for immediate supply needs
Web-Based Reporting

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<td>Non-District Clinics</td>
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<td>Clinic</td>
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<td>Alvin Community Health Endeavor</td>
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- Developed a real-time tool for reporting of patient volumes, requesting supplies and requesting provider assignments
- Daily review of volumes with PHS officials to determine allocation of provider resources
- Hospital review of supply needs and direct follow-up with clinics

Collaboration Between Public Health And Local Health Services

Immunization registry shared state-to-state

- Vaccines sent to Louisiana
- Provide vaccinations
- Support to clinics: medications, supplies
- Wheelchairs to shelters
- STD outreach
- Referrals

Hong Kong Mall (Clinic inside)
Collaboration Between Public Health And Local Health Services

- Donation management
- Nurses, doctors sent to assist
- Health dept. staff volunteered in addition to their work time
- Medical Reserve Corps
- Navigators

Publicity

To find a clinic, call **713-633-CALL (2255)**
Flexibility

- Use of mobile clinics to go to shelters, debit card distribution sites, disaster recovery center
- Mid-day reallocations of providers
- Travel with needed supplies

Katrina Warehouse

- Salvaged left-over supplies from two major shelters
- Private donations of medical supplies
- Make available to those clinics seeing the most Katrina volume and compliant with reporting requests
Sustainability

- Jump-start for Adopt a Clinic model
- Over 16,000 patient visits from September to December 2005 in community clinics
- New collaborative structure – Harris County Healthcare Alliance – to facilitate public and private strategic planning for expanded access to care for residents

Lessons Learned

What Worked

- Use of National Incident Management System (NIMS) structure with central command and control
- Katrina Health Services Committee of county-wide key players met daily
- Cooperation went beyond political boundaries
- Turf issues set aside
- Public-private partnerships
Lessons Learned

*What Has Been Improved*

- Transportation/care plans for special needs groups
- Rapid response teams
- Work with Red Cross in basic shelter training for medical staff
- All employees have a secondary emergency job description
- Disaster planning committee