



Institute for Community Health

A collaboration of the Cambridge Health Alliance, Mount Auburn Hospital, and Partners Healthcare

2007 AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

Public health readiness: Lessons learned from using a community-based, participatory approach to evaluate local public health preparedness planning in Massachusetts.

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Abstract: Community-based participatory evaluation strives to engage community partners in the development and implementation of studies, from the formulation of questions and methodologies to the interpretation and dissemination of results. In Massachusetts, this approach is being used to evaluate public health-based emergency preparedness planning activities directed by the Cambridge, MA Public Health Department, Advanced Practice Center in a 27-community emergency preparedness region surrounding Boston. This paper will focus on the strategies developed to utilize a participatory approach in a newly emerging field of practice with shifting expectations and responsibilities. In addition to an overview of the process and outcome measures developed for the evaluation, strategies for engaging and eliciting the input from community partners with limited time and resources will also be discussed. The lessons learned from this unique collaborative venture will provide helpful information for other evaluators interested in evaluation of emergency preparedness planning and other local public health activities.