

A Message from the Director

May 2019

Hello and welcome to GSHCC Connect! We continue to work to improve the coalition to bring you situational awareness, training, technical assistance and guidance on both exercise and plan development. We have come a long way over the past year and a half but still have much work to do. We urgently need your continued input and support if we are to succeed.

As of May, we have conducted at least eight exercise concepts workshops, as well as purchased Med Sled evacuation equipment and trained staff to ensure that every hospital, specialty hospital, county and state nursing home have these devices on site. We have also developed decision matrices and/or algorithms for overall System Coordination, Evacuation and Transportation and held our inaugural GSHCC Conference with nearly 200 attendees joining us.

Recently, we assisted ESF-8 during the evacuation of Cheshire Medical Center where over 40 patients were evacuated to hospitals in NH and neighboring states. As a liaison and support to ESF-8, we helped coordinate information sharing, provided technical assistance, and conducted a conference call with all hospitals during this real-world event. Previously developed relationships enhanced response and coordination efforts at all levels. Cheshire Medical Center was able to evacuate all patients safely while keeping the ED open for any self-reporting patients.

A big thank you to all hospitals who stood up their command centers ready and willing to receive patients and help in any way they could! I think this sense of collaboration is what makes NH so unique and resilient. We are willing to help our partners in any way we can in times of need. Only through this consistent value and outreach will this coalition make a true impact now and into the future. Reach out and see the difference we can make, together!



Scott Nichols
Director



Shaylin Deignan
Program Coordinator

SAVE THE DATE : October 28, 2019

Granite State Health Care Coalition General Meeting

We are looking forward to hosting the first General Meeting of the GSHCC at the NH Fire Academy Auditorium (98 Smokey Bear Blvd, Concord, NH). The status of current GSHCC projects will be presented in addition to information on upcoming trainings, exercises, conferences etc. This will also serve as a great networking opportunity to meet potential new partners. Please keep an eye out for the forthcoming agenda!

To Register: [Email GSHCC Program Coordinator, Shaylin Deignan](#). There is no fee to attend, but space is limited.



How Can We Better Assist Your Organization with Emergency Planning Efforts?

Please take this single question survey to let us know how we can better assist you. Our goal is to continue to serve our partners' needs as best we can. We appreciate your feedback and continued partnership!

[Click Here to Complete the Survey](#)

2019 Atlantic Hurricane Season- Preparedness Begins Now!

As Atlantic Hurricane Season approaches, it is time to start preparing our facilities and organizations for potential storm impacts. Atlantic Hurricane Season officially begins on June 1st, with the National Weather Service likely releasing the official outlook in late May. This is a great time to revisit Hurricane Annexes of your organization's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and train staff on relevant plans and procedures. Remember, hurricanes can impact inland areas as well; they are not solely a coastal hazard! Inland flooding attributes to facility evacuations, power outages, and many road closures, not to mention millions of dollars in damages each year.

For additional information on hurricane preparedness, seasonal outlooks, and real-time storm data visit the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) National Weather Services \(NWS\) National Hurricane Center site.](#)

ASPR – Key lessons Learned from Hurricane Response for Healthcare

1. Prepare patients (especially dialysis)
2. Communicate often
3. Plan for utility disruptions
4. Provide assistance to vulnerable/ at-risk populations
5. Ensure key supplies are available
6. Update evacuation and shelter-in-place plans
7. Take care of staff!
8. Plan early for recovery

[Click for additional information on hurricane preparedness for all healthcare sectors](#)

[Click for additional information on pre-storm healthcare facility preparedness from Yale New Haven Health](#)

Register for NH Alerts

Sign-up for **NH Alerts**, the State of New Hampshire Emergency Alert System (EAS), that provides public safety notifications from the NH Department of Safety and severe weather warnings directly from the National Weather Service. By [registering here](#), you become automatically enrolled in your local NH community's CodeRED emergency notification system. Additionally, please feel free to download the NH Alerts mobile app.



Self-Care Tips for Healthcare Professionals

All of us in the healthcare field feel a certain amount of daily stress, but we can take proactive steps to alleviate the potential negative impacts our bodies endure:

- Eat sensibly- avoid sugar, fried food, and red meat
- Strive to get at least eight hours of sleep per night
- Exercise regularly - just get moving!
- Be aware of your stress level and avoid exceeding your limits - take a break!
- Acknowledge your reactions to stressful situations and allow yourself time to cope with these emotions - talk to a friend, take a walk outside, meditate, take a yoga class

[Click for additional information](#)

Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) Outbreak in NH

At this time, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) has announced there has been a substantial increase in the number of people diagnosed with hepatitis A virus (HAV) in NH. There have been 98 new acute HAV infections reported since November 2018, largely across the southern part of the state of NH. This outbreak comes with a very high hospitalization rate and has resulted in one death this year. The Bureau of Infectious Disease Control is working with community partners to prevent the spread of the virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been assisting health departments across the country as large outbreaks of hepatitis A virus continue to develop. More than 15,000 cases and 140 deaths have been reported in the United States since 2016. Hepatitis A is spread through person to person contact, largely through individuals either experiencing homelessness or through recreational drug use (injection and non-injection). The best way to prevent the hepatitis A virus is to get vaccinated. Hand washing remains a best practice to prevent the spread of bacteria.

For the most accurate and timely information please see below.

[NH DHHS Health Alerts](#)

[NH DHHS Hep A Outbreak Updates](#)

[CDC Hep A Outbreak Information](#)

2019 NH Emergency Preparedness Conference

June 4, 2019 DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester Downtown Hotel

Please sign up for the NH Emergency Preparedness Conference if you have not already done so. Presented by the NH Department of Health and Human Services and the NH Department of Safety, this conference will be held on **June 4, 2019 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester Downtown Hotel** (formerly the Radisson). The theme of this conference is a collaborative all-hazards approach to emergency preparedness.

It is free to attend and lunch will be provided.

[Click Here to Register](#)



Granite State Health Care Coalition - Exercise Concepts Workshops

The Granite State Health Care Coalition (GSHCC) has held eight Exercise Concepts Workshops in Plymouth, Concord, Manchester, Keene, Littleton, Exeter, and Lebanon in order to provide basic exercise guidance to health care organizations mandated to comply with the CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule Requirements. Dozens of partners from various health care sectors attended providing the opportunity for essential networking, including those from hospitals, long-term care, dialysis, Public Health Networks, home health care, hospice, FQHCs, EMS, MRC, outpatient mental health centers, primary care and child care. The workshops provided basic Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) principles which focus on a common capability-based, objective driven approach to exercise development and execution. In addition, the workshops contained a train-the-trainer session presented as a table top exercise tutorial where instructors walked through a rain event, electrical fire, or winter storm hazard, allowing participants to discuss how they would potentially proceed using their organization's plans and policies. If you would like to receive these GSHCC ready-made tabletop exercises, [please email GSHCC Director Scott Nichols](#). Additional information on HSEEP, including templates and guidance, [can be found here](#).

2018-2019 GSHCC Jurisdictional Risk Assessment (JRA)

Thank you to those that were able to complete our **GSHCC JRA Survey** back in the Fall of 2018. Not only is this a key coalition level requirement from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), but this data helped us generate health care system-wide mitigation strategies. Partners from public health, hospitals, EMS, emergency management, long-term care, home health care, dialysis, outpatient mental health, urgent care, behavioral health, and FQHCs joined us for a half-day meeting to discuss survey results. The group came to consensus on two top strategies - **prioritized strategy #1**: strengthen statewide preparedness to support health care facilities in the event of medical surge, and **prioritized strategy #2**: strengthen engagement of statewide partners in the GSHCC by engaging additional partners, promoting the benefits of involvement in GSHCC activities to organizations, and ensure partners are aware of the capabilities and roles of the GSHCC and other partners. Contact Program Coordinator, [Shaylin Deignan](#), for the GSHCC JRA Summary of Discussion. The full report is to come.

2019 Granite State Health Care Coalition Conference

Thank you for attending the 2019 inaugural Granite State Health Care Coalition Conference on May 9th! We had over 195 partners in attendance, nine exhibitors and seven incredible presentations delivered by esteemed colleagues in the field of emergency preparedness from across the state, region and nation. This day would not have been a success without your participation and feedback.

We look forward to hosting you all for another great conference in 2020!



Bi-State Primary Care Association and GSHCC Partnership

Bi-State Primary Care Association supports 29 Community Health Centers, 21 of which are Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), in both New Hampshire and Vermont. Since joining the Granite State Health Care Coalition in 2018, Bi-State has become more involved in statewide trainings and assessments on emergency preparedness. As a result, we have gained valuable insight into the needs of our state's health centers, which helps guide the training and technical assistance we provide to help them best serve their communities. Recently, the Coalition partnered with Bi-State on a session titled "Emergency Preparedness: Are You Ready?" at the annual conference, where GSHCC Director Scott Nichols and GSHCC Program Coordinator Shaylin Deignan provided a train-the-trainer tabletop rain event exercise tailored to NH and VT FQHCs, alongside experts from HRSA and the State of Vermont. To help support its members and enhance their ability to prepare for and respond to emergencies, this session aimed to provide attendees a concrete plan that they could then bring back to their facilities for use.

[For more information on the Bi-State Primary Care Association please click here.](#)

Closed POD Planning for Healthcare Organizations

If a major public health emergency threatens the health of NH residents and visitors, and a large portion of the population needs to receive medication or vaccinations rapidly, how would that happen? It would happen through Points of Dispensing (POD) sites which are strategically located around the state and maintained by one of the 13 Public Health Networks (PHN). Each PHN is responsible for POD planning and operational functions, since the intent of the POD is to provide medical countermeasures (MCMs) to people rapidly and efficiently in order to prevent disease from spreading.

There are two types of PODs: open and closed. An open POD is where the general population would go to receive MCMs. It is expected that these sites will receive thousands of people and, despite efforts to make the process as rapid and efficient as possible, there will likely be increased wait times and increased stress.

A closed POD is a specific population (NOT open to the public) that administers MCMs to their own staff, staff families, and residents or co-workers. They would receive the necessary MCMs and any important information from their PHN (at no cost). Some closed POD examples include: hospitals, long-term care facilities, large businesses, prisons, etc.

What's the benefit of becoming a closed POD?

- Ensuring that your clients/residents are protected and taken care of;
- Knowing that your staff and their families are taken care of;
- Ability to continue operations as staff will be more likely to come to work;
- No stressing about how to get residents transported to an open POD and back;
- Enhanced relationship with your PHN;
- Being a good community partner by helping to relieve the burden of open PODs.

If you would like some additional information, or are interested in becoming a closed POD, please reach out to your regional Public Health Network coordinator; [you can find contact information here.](#)



Androscoggin Valley Hospital (AVH) Closed POD Exercise

Hello fellow Emergency Preparedness friends,

Last month, AVH participated in a Closed Point of Dispensing (POD) exercise with the City of Berlin and Coos County. When the call came months ago asking if we were interested, I jumped at the opportunity as it was crucial in helping prepare us for Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) survey 2020 (and to just plain practice our Code White processes). This drill would take place on a Saturday which meant a skeleton crew in a Critical Access Hospital (CAH), so there was some concern about not only pulling this off but offering participation we would be proud of and gain from.

When the day came, my part was securing the antibiotics from the Open POD at Berlin High School. That process flowed smoothly and I was impressed with the police escort afforded me and the recognition that the hospital must be both supplied and protected in an event where a panicked community would surely follow.

Chain of Custody followed those antibiotics from the AVH lobby to our pharmacy where a distribution strategy was created and followed; all under the guidance and support from the Incident Command Center (ICC) we established at the onset of the drill.

During the 90-minute exercise we were successful in meeting the drill objective, but a collective thought began to resonate among my team. Distribution to seven patients was not our primary concern - my team was focused on securing point of entry during the panic that would certainly follow in the coming hours, days and weeks. Three nurses, a pharmacist, an administrator and a physician framed a plan that would call in additional support for the Emergency Department, while establishing a second point of entry for victims of the event. Many of you saw this come through Knowledge Center on the morning of the exercise. Our goal was a simple one - maintain operations while carving away the chaos.

I was incredibly proud of this small team for having the foresight of what had to be done imminently while preparing for the unthinkable that would follow. Thank goodness we did not delve into the psychological impact of being a caregiver at the hospital while fearing for loved one's safety outside of the hospital (funny how you really don't want that to get in your heads).

My friends, we do incredibly important work at the GSHCC table (our table). Yes, in our camps, it is hard to get interest in filling our tables and perhaps that it is because we focus on preparing for the unthinkable. If you noted, I did not mention what type of event caused the need for the POD exercise. I didn't need to because in each of your minds, the experiences are already there. Your own experiences drive your passion to protect life (and they probably roped you into reading a few lines from an old-timer up in the North Country).

Stay safe and cover one another,

Brian O'Hearn MBA, BSN, CEN
Chief Nursing Officer / Vice President, Patient Care Services
Androscoggin Valley Hospital



The New Hampshire Information and Analysis Center (NHIAC)

The NHIAC is a clearinghouse for information and intelligence relative to natural and human-caused threats to the State of New Hampshire, its people and the environment. It is an all-crimes/all-hazards information and analysis center, designed to collect, analyze and disseminate information derived from multiple sources to stakeholders in a timely manner. The NHIAC does so, in an effort to protect the citizens and critical infrastructure of New Hampshire, while ensuring the protection of civil rights and civil liberties.

The center provides strategic and tactical information directed at the most serious threats to the State of New Hampshire and its people. It monitors information from a variety of open and classified sources, analyzes that information, and is able to provide an informational product that will serve public safety, and private sector interests, whose mission it is to serve the homeland security, public health and safety, and emergency management needs of their constituents and the State.

The NHIAC is able to assist its Healthcare and Public Health (HPH) sector partners:

- *Handle and report physical or cyber threat information received by employees or facilities.*
- *Monitor/collect data, and provide situational reports to local, state, federal counterparts on infectious disease prevalence in New Hampshire.*
- *Provide training to staff of current threat landscape and suspicious activity/threat indicators.*
- *Publishing trend information, training opportunities and priority information important to HPH sector personnel.*



Statewide Training Calendar

[Please click here](#) for an updated training calendar from New Hampshire Department of Safety, Division of Fire Standards and Training and Emergency Medical Services

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

We are actively seeking new members from state and local public and private organizations across the continuum of care. To become a member or to learn more about GSHCC, e-mail [Shaylin Deignan](#) or reach out by phone at (603) 415-4263.

The Granite State Health Care Coalition is an initiative of the Foundation for Healthy Communities, a non-profit organization that engages in innovative partnerships to improve health and health care in New Hampshire by addressing quality of care, access to care and community prevention.

