As Acting Director of the National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health (NCDMPH) and on behalf of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), I am thrilled to bring you the first newsletter describing recent activities! Our efforts in developing the academic joint program will be summarized in future newsletters.

The NCDMPH serves as an academic center of excellence for education, training and research in disaster medicine and public health preparedness. The National Center was established in 2008 under Homeland Security Presidential Directive 21, paragraph 38 to, “lead Federal efforts to develop and propagate core curricula, training, and research related to medicine and public health in disasters.” Our first step in answering this call was to hold an inaugural federal partner meeting in September, which is summarized separately.

I bring nearly 27 years of active duty service with the US Navy Medical Corps to this critical effort. I retired on 01 May, 2009 and have been retained as federal civilian faculty at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. My appointments at this nation’s only federal health sciences university include: Acting Director of the National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health, Assistant Professor in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Biometrics, and Public Health Emergency Officer.

I look forward to working with a diverse group of stakeholders as we at the National Center exercise our HSPD-21 authority to ensure cross-boundary education and training, collaboration that is cutting-edge, innovative, and outcomes focused. Visit our website at http://ncdmph.usuhs.edu.
History has shown us the realities of the devastation and loss of life that occur when disasters strike. We remember the grim sights and the long after math of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the anthrax attacks in the Fall of 2001, hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in 2005, and the Virginia Tech murders in 2007. In home towns across the nation, the evening news reminds us of the countless emergencies that occur on a day to day basis which require federal, state and local resources to act in an organized and competent manner.

Federal efforts have been put in place to ensure this Nation continues to become ever-more prepared to respond competently and effectively to disaster. The 9/11 Commission Report draws attention to the ultimate focus of the National Center for Disaster Medicine & Public Health efforts as supported by the FETIG. It states:

"Emergency response is a product of preparedness. On the morning of September 11, 2001, the last best hope for the community of people working in or visiting the World Trade Center rested not with national policymakers but with private firms and local public servants, especially the first responders: fire, police, emergency medical service, and building safety professionals." (p. 278)

The Federal Education and Training Interagency Group (FETIG) was created in accordance with HSPD-21 and the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act of 2006 to serve as the coordinating mechanism for core competencies and education and training standards across Federal departments and agencies, as well as state and local government entities, academia, and the private sector in relation to public health emergency and disaster response. Its historic charter has been signed by senior leadership within the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Transportation. Additionally, approximately 30 federal agencies are included as active voting members of the group. According to FETIG co-chair CAPT D.W. Chen, the role of the FETIG is to:

- Serve as a board of advisors, as a board of governors, if you will, for the new National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health
- Provide a level of coordination within the federal government
- Provide a platform for information sharing
- Provide a mechanism to develop a unified US government voice on issues with those outside the federal government.

The FETIG, and NCDMPH, are both committed to a single vision. That vision, according to FETIG co-chair Dr. Mike Handrigan, is pretty simple. What both entities desire to achieve is, “A nation educated and trained effectively to respond to medical and public health emergencies.” This is not an easy task, as Dr. Handrigan...
More than 100 senior-level participants from across a variety of federal agencies came together for the inaugural “A Nation Prepared” conference in September, hosted by the National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health (NCDMPH). Senior representatives of the five signatory agencies to the FETIG charter and the White House National Security Staff charged attendees with beginning the challenging process of identifying disaster medicine and public health education and training needs across the federal sector.

“The mission and goals of the NCDMPH shall promote standardized education and training of public health and medical disaster preparedness response based on collaboratively developed and accepted core competencies, procedures and terms of reference,” said Dr. David Marcozzi, Director of All-Hazards Preparedness Policy for the White House National Security Staff and lunchtime keynote speaker. “The National Center will share their findings with federal, state, local and tribal government, academia, and the private sector. This lift is large. If it were easy, it would be done already.”

Dr. Kenneth W. Schor, DO, MPH, acting director of the Center believes the program accomplished all it set out to do in this inaugural meeting. “People got engaged, they felt empowered to provide feedback, and they had the opportunity to share quite a bit,” said Dr. Schor. “We definitely did more listening than speaking because we felt we needed to be careful not to take people too far out of their comfort zones without first proving our worth.”

Schor added that he and the Joint Program Coordinator, Kandra Strauss-Riggs, were impressed by the willingness of attendees to create a sum that is greater than its parts and to openly share their thoughts and experiences.

Inaugural Disaster Preparedness Conference Draws Praise

Back row:
Dr. Alexander Garza (DHS),
Col. Donald Noah (DOD),
Dr. Gerald Parker (HHS),
Mr. Michael Lowder (DOT)

Front row:
Dr. David Marcozzi (White House),
Dr. Kenneth W. Schor (NCDMPH),
Dr. Victoria Davey (VA)
National Center Coalitions Begin Building a Collective Voice

At the Inaugural Federal Partner Workshop on September 25, the first Federal Partner coalition building session was introduced. Coalitions will be one of the many tools the National Center uses as it creates the academic Joint Program for Disaster Medicine and Public Health. In support of HSPD-21, these coalitions will use their collective “voice” to help shape core curricula and training to foster standardization across the federal government and into the non-federal sectors.

Coalitions have historically been effective in bringing individuals from diverse groups together around a common goal — to solve a problem or set of problems in partnership with others. They have become an increasingly valuable tool in addressing public health issues and the National Center is excited about the impact these coalitions will have on the Joint Program.

The National Center is reaching out to disaster medicine and public health stakeholders to participate actively in its work. Dr. Kenneth W. Schor, DO, MPH, acting director of the National Center believes that we need to spend time listening and learning from each other. “The National Center, as a learning organization, can play the role of honest broker in these discussions,” said Dr. Schor. Coalitions will eventually include individuals from many sectors of both federal and non-federal groups to provide diverse viewpoints, facilitate collaboration, and identify the path to successful attainment of common Joint Program goals.

Initial coalitions were identified based upon feedback from participants at the Federal Partner Workshop. They include:

- Competency Collaboration
- Silo Busting
- Managing Information
- Needs Assessment

Work will begin in the upcoming months to establish coalition goals and timelines. Upcoming newsletters will detail the exciting work of these groups. For additional information or to volunteer for a coalition, please contact Joint Program Coordinator Kandra Strauss-Riggs at 301-294-3762 or via email at kstraussriggs@hjf.org.