

Public Health Nurses – Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Leaders

An Interim Statement of the

Association of Public Health Nurses (APHN) Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Committee

In 2007 and 2014 APHN¹ published position papers describing [preparedness and emergency response roles of public health nurses](#). Since then, there have been innovations in technology and response systems while emergencies and disasters have increased in frequency, size, severity, and complexity, negatively impacting morbidity, mortality, and mental health. The myriad of natural disasters, wildfires, mass casualty events, train derailments carrying hazardous materials, outbreaks including the COVID-19 pandemic, and other crises highlight the critical roles of public health nurses during every phase of preparedness and response. Nurses lead at all levels of public health emergencies, from the school nurse who first notified the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the H1N1 outbreak in 2009, to the myriad of [nurse-led innovations saving lives during the COVID-19 response](#).

These crises disproportionately affect those with low incomes, limited access to health care, and people experiencing housing insecurity. The [National Academy of Sciences Future of Nursing 2020-2030 Report](#) charts a path to improving health equity by better preparing nurses to respond to disasters and public health emergencies. Public health nurses are well suited to lead these efforts, bringing critical knowledge of health systems and social determinants of health.

In November 2022, The American Nurses Association (ANA) published the 3rd Edition of the [Scope and Standards of Practice for Public Health Nursing](#) which defines the expected competencies of all public health nurses regardless of role, specialty, and setting. In May 2023, the Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations (CPHNO), which includes APHN, endorsed the public health nurse competencies defined in the ANA Scope and Standards as the [single set of foundational competencies for all public health nurses](#). While a single set of foundational competencies is essential to practice, APHN recognizes the need for a unified framework and set of public health nurse emergency preparedness and response competencies. The public health nurse preparedness and response framework and associated competencies are intended to provide public health nurses, their supervisors, and emergency management stakeholders a clear understanding of the emergency preparedness and response roles and capabilities of public health nurses, how to leverage their unique skillset of multi-sector health care coordination, and to ensure that public health nurses are supported and protected in their vital roles caring for individuals and communities in emergency and disaster situations.

The APHN Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Committee exploring a public health nurse preparedness and response framework and competencies as an update to their 2014 position paper. The EPR Committee is drawing from the ANA PHN Scope and Standards, as well as recent publications such as the updated [International Council of Nurses \(ICN\) Framework of Disaster Nursing Competencies](#), the [Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Capabilities](#), and the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice ([NACNEP 2023 report on preparing the nurse workforce for future public health challenges](#)). APHN is also collaborating with the Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (ACHNE) to ensure alignment and synergy with related nursing education competencies.

If you want to support this effort, have examples of nurse-led emergency response innovations to share, or have information to contribute, please contact opsmgr@phnurse.org or use [this form](#). Preliminary content and an update will be presented at the April 2024 APHN Annual Conference.

¹ In 2007, APHN was named the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing (ASTDN)