



Center for Health Equality  
at Drexel School of Public Health



## Reaching and Engaging Diverse Communities in Preparing for Emergencies in California: Assessing the Present, Charting the Future

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# Overview

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# The Center for Health Equality (CHE)

***Mission:** To eliminate health disparities and improve the health and well-being of communities by:*

- Providing expert assistance to local, state, and national organizations on cultural competence and disparities reduction;
- Conducting applied research;
- Developing curricula and education programs;
- Convening national, state, and local conferences;
- Communicating related information and innovations.

# Impetus for our Preparedness & Diversity Work

- The tragedy surrounding Hurricane Katrina provided graphic evidence of the serious and longstanding inequities faced by racial and ethnic populations in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery
- This prompted CHE to conduct a national review of research and programs in 2007 to:
  - Determine to what extent racial/ethnic minorities have been considered in emergency preparedness programs, strategies, and efforts
  - Identify leading research, promising practices, and resources for training, education, and initiative development

## Findings from the review identified a number of programmatic gaps to integrating culturally diverse communities into emergency preparedness activities...

- Lack of a unified voice and a national presence on the issue
- While promising programs and efforts existed, we found a lack of coordination of resources as well as roles and responsibilities across agencies, sectors, and regions
- Lack of guidance on promising and evidence-based practices
- Few agencies and organizations were making concerted efforts to adapt and tailor risk communication, drills, and exercises to diverse community needs
- Limited funding at all levels to explicitly address and incorporate diversity issues into emergency preparedness plans and training curricula

In response to these program and policy gaps CHE received support to undertake a series of emergency preparedness and cultural diversity initiatives...

- The National Consensus Panel on Emergency Preparedness and Cultural Diversity
- The National Resource Center of Emergency Preparedness and Cultural Diversity ([www.DiversityPreparedness.org](http://www.DiversityPreparedness.org))
- Conduct a review California's current emergency preparedness efforts for culturally diverse communities
- Convene California state, local, and community panel sessions

# Review of California's Preparedness & Diversity Efforts

- Supported by The California Endowment and USDHHS, Office of Minority Health
  
- *Objective:* Systematically review existing policies, programs, and practices targeting racial/ethnically diverse communities in California to identify...
  - Individual-level barriers to preparedness and response
  - Institutional-level barriers to preparedness and response
  - Programmatic and policy gaps
  - Promising programs and strategies to reaching culturally diverse communities across all phases of an emergency

# Rationale for focusing on California

- California's culturally diverse population
  - Over 40% non-white
  - 1 in 3 Hispanic/Latino
  - 1 in 10 Asian
  - 1 in 3 foreign born
  - 43% speak a language other than English
  - 1 in 5 (6.8 million) speak English less than very well
  - Estimated 2.4 million undocumented immigrants

# Rationale for focusing on California

- Long history of coping with disasters
  - Nearly 5,000 wildfires yearly
  - Several major earthquakes
  - Landslides
  - Heat waves
  
- Leading in state and local initiatives for preparing and responding to racially/ethnically communities which largely emerged in 1989 following the Loma Prieta Earthquake

# Methodology

## □ Three pronged approach:

- Literature Review of disaster and public health publications to examine how minorities have fared in past disaster in the state
- Web-Based Review of 148 websites providing information on emergency preparedness originating from state, local, community, public/private sector organizations in the state (conducted in Summer of 2008)
- Key Informant Interviews with experts from a range of sectors, disciplines, and geographic regions

# Findings: Literature Review

## □ Barriers encountered by diverse communities before, during, and after an event

- *Low socioeconomic status:* limited financial resources; substandard housing; low literacy; and limited means of transportation
- *Culture and language:* limited English proficiency; limited familiarity with U.S. culture, customs, and programs; and information received from non-mainstream sources
- *Trust and perceived fairness of government response:* low trust in warning messages and service providers; less likely to believe that government will respond fairly to their needs

## Findings: Literature Review (continued)

### □ Challenges faced by emergency planners, managers, and service providers

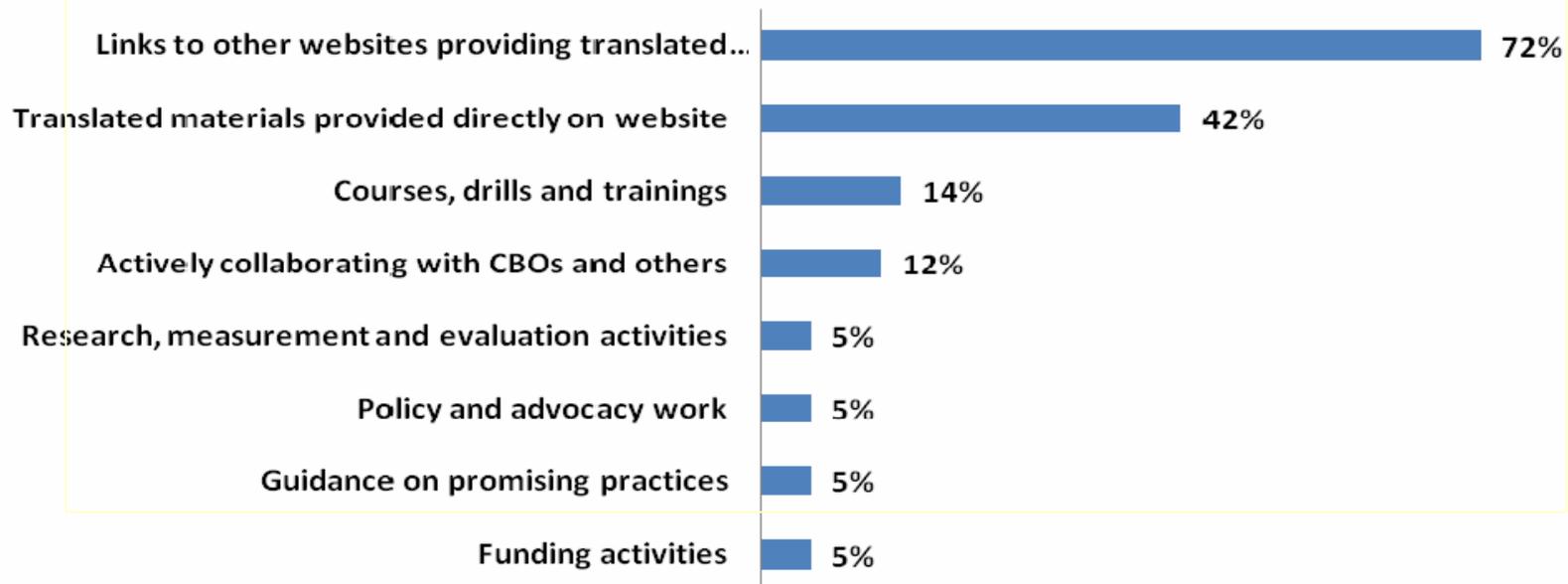
- ***Knowledge:*** limited knowledge about diverse communities, their cultures, and distinct needs
- ***Infrastructure:*** limited support to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services (e.g., workforce diversity, availability of on-site bilingual interpreters, and cultural competence training for service providers)
- ***Resources:*** lack of sustainable funding, limited flexibility in allocating funds, few resources to facilitate collaboration

# Findings: Web-based Review (continued)

□ Of the 148 organizational websites profiled...

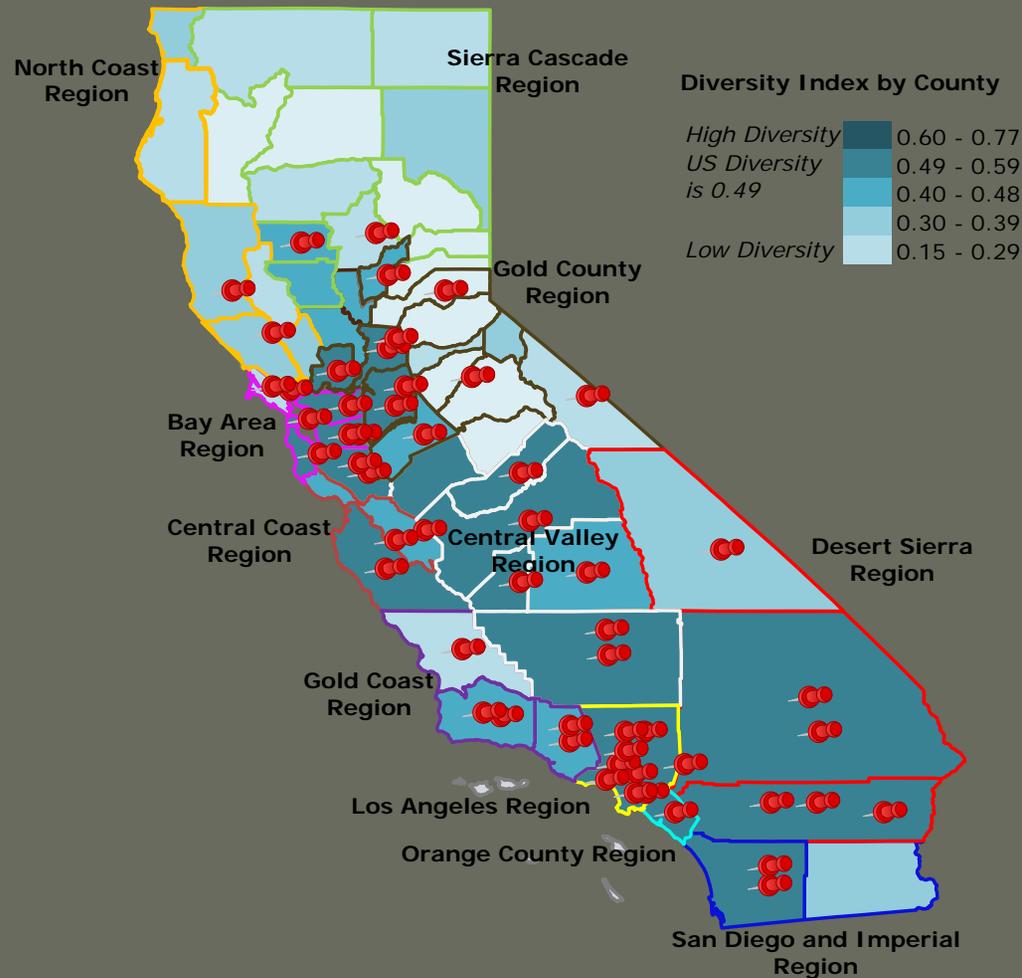
**Findings from a Web-Based Review:  
Percentage of State, Local and Community Organizations with  
Emergency Preparedness Initiatives for Diverse Communities  
California, June-August 2008**

**N = 148 Organizational Websites**



# Findings: Web-based Review (continued)

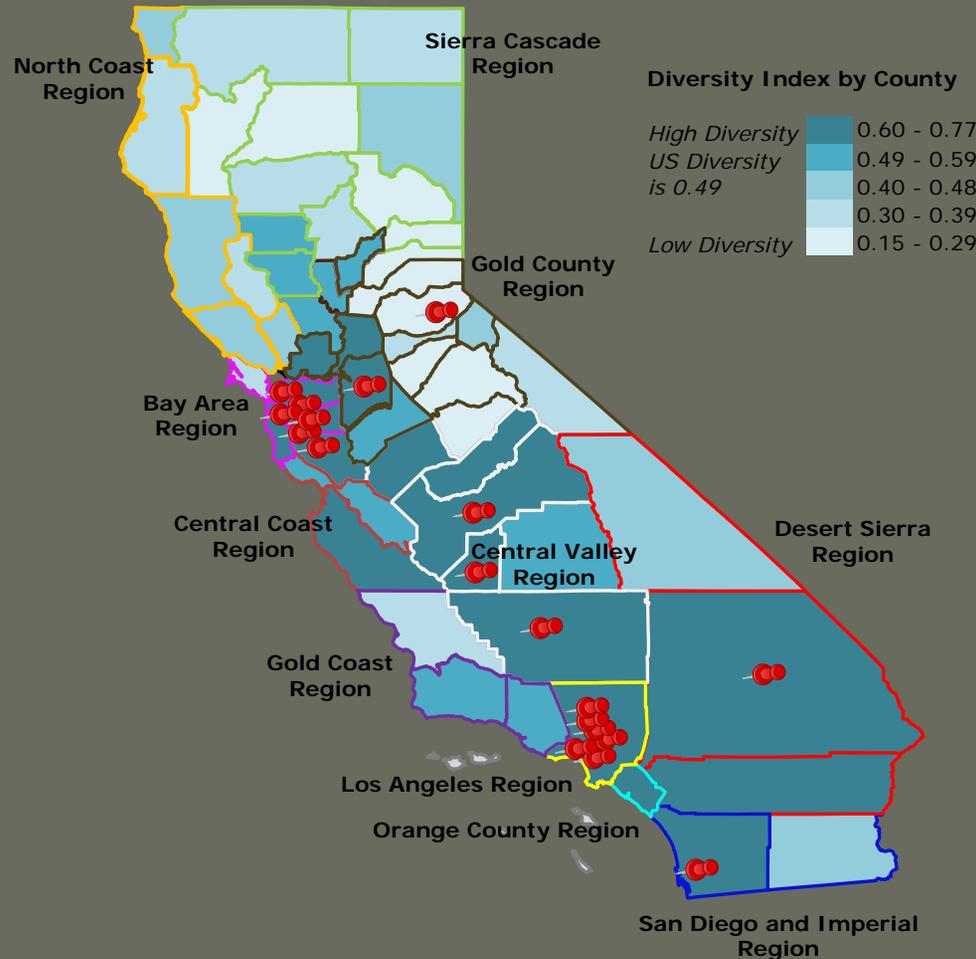
- Where are the agencies that provide translated resources located across California?



Data Source for Diversity: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

# Findings: Web-based Review (continued)

- Where are the agencies that provide training and education programs on diversity preparedness located across California?



Data Source for Diversity: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

## Findings: Web-based Review (continued)

- What are examples of organizations conducting promising initiatives?
  - *Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters (CARD)*: trains and prepares CBOs to respond to disasters; coordinates efforts between CBOs serving diverse communities and county/state preparedness and response agencies
  - *The Fritz Institute- BayPrep Program*: fosters cross-sector partnerships between not-for-profit, for-profit, philanthropic, and public agencies; conducted comprehensive assessment of the capacity of CBOs in the San Francisco Bay Area to respond to disasters
  - *Shasta County Cultural Awareness Council Action Plan*: encourages first responders to develop enduring relationships with culturally diverse communities in non-emergency situations by attending cultural festivals and sporting events

# Findings: Key Informant Interviews

- Where were the key informants from?
  - 6 not-for-profit organizations
  - 3 county public health departments
  - 2 local emergency management & response organizations
  - 3 community-based organizations
  - 2 state agencies
  - 1 academic research institution
  
- Key informants represented 4 different regions, including Central Coast, Bay Area, Central Valley, and Los Angeles, as well as the state of California

## Findings: Key Informant Interviews (continued)

- Individual-level barriers to reaching California's diverse communities in emergencies:
  - ***Socioeconomic Stressors:*** low income; preparedness not a priority; inability to perform structural mitigation to homes; working multiple jobs
  - ***Trust:*** limited trust in government and service providers (especially among immigrant populations)
  - ***Culture and Language:*** language access barriers; lack of knowledge about cultural intricacies; misleading verbatim translations
  - ***Geographic Isolation:*** unincorporated areas with minimal contact to mainstream

# Findings: Key Informant Interviews

(continued)

- Institutional/Organizational-level barriers to meeting the emergency preparedness needs of diverse communities in California:
  - ***Funding issues:*** limited funding opportunities to sustain culturally/linguistically competent services; rigid guidelines for funding allocation
  - ***Community input:*** minimal collaboration between local community members and public agencies in planning process
  - ***Inter-organization collaboration:*** lack of coordination and sharing of resources between agencies

## Findings: Key Informant Interviews (continued)

- Strategies and practices to effectively integrating the needs diverse communities into preparedness activities:
  - ***Community Engagement:*** establishing planning committees and advisory groups; building informal partnerships; attending cultural festivals and events; using *promotores* to raise awareness and conduct training sessions with Hispanic/Latino community
  - ***Infrastructure support for culturally and linguistically appropriate services:*** recruiting bilingual and racial/ethnic staff; establishing policies that encourage the use of professional interpreters
  - ***Assessment of community needs and capacity:*** identifying the distinct and specific needs of culturally diverse communities as well as community resources and assets

## Findings: Key Informant Interviews (continued)

### □ Recommendations on coordinating activities across agencies and sectors:

- ***Establishing partnerships between agencies:*** sharing resources, co-logging translated materials to reduce costs; joint training sessions
- ***Steering committees:*** establishing mandatory committees comprised of community representatives within California's Office of Emergency Services and other emergency management and response agencies
- ***Ethnic media:*** partnering with ethnic media outlets to develop and disseminate preparedness information and emergency information
- ***Neighborhood councils:*** working with grassroots organizations to provide basic preparedness information
- ***Schools:*** working with schools to disseminate basic preparedness information to children and families

# Findings: Key Informant Interviews (continued)

## □ Recommendations for policy change:

- ***Encourage collaboration across organizations:*** jointly-funded projects; financial incentives for active collaboration (e.g., subsidizing travel); transparent partnerships
- ***Increase program flexibility for local agencies:*** provide opportunities for agencies to implement innovative strategies and tailor plans to meet distinct community needs
- ***Increase flexibility and sustainability of funding:*** sustain funds to allow for the recruitment and training of professional interpreters; allow greater flexibility in allocating funds to facilitate innovative partnerships; increase funding to allow for translated materials to be printed (as opposed to only available online)

# California Panel Sessions

- To supplement our initial findings, provide an opportunity for feedback, and increase dialogue on the issue between key stakeholders from critical sectors at national, state, and local levels, we convened two panels of experts in California.
  - Panel meetings took place at the second meeting of the National Consensus Panel on Emergency Preparedness and Cultural Diversity before representatives from 34 leading national, state, and local organizations
  - Supported by The California Endowment and USDHHS, Office of Minority Health

# California Panel Session Objectives

- *State/Regional Preparedness & Diversity Panel:*
  - Purpose: To identify state/regional priorities for integrating diverse communities into preparedness planning and implementation
  
- *Local/Community Preparedness & Diversity Panel:*
  - Purpose: To identify strategies for partnering and engaging community-based organizations and representatives

# California Panel Session: Conclusions and Themes

□ Both panels identified a shared set of priorities for integrating diverse communities into emergency preparedness that reaffirmed those identified in the literature review and were expressed by key informants

- ***Engaging Communities and Building Partnerships:***

- Building on already established public-private partnerships
- Providing leadership and volunteer training to community members
- Involving community members in drills
- Inviting community representatives to participate in planning committees
- Partnering with ethnic media

# California Panel Session: Conclusions and Themes

- *Addressing Broader Social, Economic, and Political Factors in Emergency Preparedness Planning for Diverse Communities*
  - Educational materials with information that communities can identify with, access, and afford
  - Drills and tabletop exercises that consider unique community circumstances such as transportation needs and housing conditions
- *Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services*
  - Increasing diversity among first responders by recruiting and training members from local community
  - Partnering with academic centers to provide cultural competency education and training to responders
  - Developing culturally appropriate translated materials

# Discussion

- Disparities, challenges, and barriers faced by racially/ethnically diverse communities are not new; they are deeply rooted in social, economic, and political complexities that require specific attention through emergency preparedness planning and implementation processes.
- While in California, efforts over the past couple of decades have emerged to address the needs of diverse communities in emergencies, many remain focused on “more of the same”
  - E.g., only providing translated materials to meet the needs of their communities (often verbatim and not culturally competent)

## Discussion (continued)

- Where promising practices and strategies exist, they are fragmented and implemented only by a few organizations
  - E.g., Conducting community needs assessments; involving community members in local preparedness planning and implementation; non-English training opportunities
- Efforts also remain largely concentrated in densely populated areas across the state (e.g., Bay Area and Los Angeles)
- Few efforts are being made to integrate principles of cultural and linguistic competence (that have proven to be successful in reducing disparities in health care) in planning and implementation
  - E.g., cultural competence training for first responders and service providers, onsite interpreters, diverse workforce

# Program & Policy Directions

- Based on findings from our review of current efforts in California, we suggest five areas for concentrating future programs and policies at the state/local level:
  - Harnessing and coordinating programs, resources, and information across agencies, sectors, and regions
  - Providing infrastructure support for developing culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and services
  - Collaborating between public health/emergency management/first response agencies and the local community to foster trust and understanding
  - Tailoring emergency preparedness plans and actions to the broader social, economic, and political circumstances of communities
  - Assuring sufficient, sustainable, and flexible funding opportunities to meet the needs of diverse communities

# Implications and Value of California Emergency Preparedness/Diversity Study

- Prototype for conducting statewide and regional review of emergency preparedness initiatives for racially/ethnically diverse communities
- Identifies gaps and directions for program and policy development
- Provides an environmental scan of diversity and preparedness efforts across the state to facilitate the exchange of information and collaboration building
- Provides direction on promising practices, what works and what does not work

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