

Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant SUCCESS STORY 2017

Preventive Medicine Residency Program /California Epidemiologic Investigation Service Fellowship Program Block Grant Supports Hands-On Learning

Issue: California's public health emergency responders were busy in 2017, protecting and serving California communities affected by natural disasters and public health emergencies including devastating Northern California wildfires in October and the largest person-to-person hepatitis A outbreak in the United States since 1996.¹

During emergency responses, state and local health department (LHD) staff are stretched thin and additional skilled public health personnel are needed for support. Epidemiologists attend graduate school, acquiring a Master's degree or PhD, but often receive little real-world experience as part of their education. Similarly, physicians receive virtually no practical public health experience during medical school.

Intervention: The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) runs the California Epidemiologic Investigation Service Fellowship Program, or Cal-EIS, to provide 1-2 years of hands-on training to recent public health school graduates interested in a career in epidemiology.

CDPH trains physicians to be public health leaders in California through its Preventive Medicine Residency Program (PMRP), providing a 2-year, hands-on training experience that places resident physicians at LHDs.

In 2017, two PMRP residents and six Cal-EIS fellows supported wildfire and hepatitis A responses at the state and local levels, providing much needed help to CDPH and the Counties of Mariposa, Napa, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Solano.

Resident and fellow roles during the emergency responses included providing guidance to clinicians; serving as operations section coordinator; completing situation reports; entering, managing, and analyzing data; assisting with vaccination campaigns; conducting shelter needs assessments; and communicating with the public regarding risks to health and safety.

Impact: CDPH Preventive Medicine residents and Cal-EIS fellows are supported directly by Block Grant funds and monies leveraged by Block Grant funds.

Block Grant funds have leveraged over \$1.3 million in federal, state, and local funds to support the training of Cal-EIS fellows and preventive medicine residents.

The Block Grant serves as the foundation of a win-win formula that provides public health trainees with real-world experience and hands-on learning opportunities while also providing CDPH and LHDs with skilled emergency responders.

CDPH trainees recognize that participation in emergency responses provides a unique opportunity to develop their skills. Neale Batra, MSc, a Cal-EIS fellow at Santa Clara County Public Health Department notes, "In responding to the hepatitis A outbreak I grew my epidemiological skills while learning the nuances of preventing person-to-person transmission among incarcerated and hard-to-reach homeless and substance user populations."

1. California Department of Public Health. Hepatitis A Outbreak in California [website]. Updated December 28, 2017. Available at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/Hepatitis-A-Outbreak.aspx>.