

Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant

SUCCESS STORY 2018

EMS Health Information Exchange

One Pulse, One Emergency Health Information System

Public Health Issue: Disasters are unpredictable and disruptive. They occur with little to no warning and place unique demands on public health, private sector healthcare, first responders, and other key resources. Sadly, both natural and manmade disasters result in direct casualties and injuries caused by the event itself. But, the effects extend far beyond these victims. Often, the disaster displaces large numbers of people and can disrupt their ability to obtain their normal healthcare services. Healthcare facilities and ambulatory locations may be destroyed or damaged resulting in care being disrupted. Health information is maintained in multiple electronic health records across different healthcare organizations and not available to all health care providers. The Patient Unified Lookup System for Emergencies (PULSE) was created to address this issue. PULSE is a web-based application accessed via single sign-on through the Disaster Healthcare Volunteers (DHV) portal that allows a user to search for and retrieve health information on disaster victims or evacuees. PULSE was designed to integrate with the existing California DHV database, California's implementation of an Emergency Service Advance Registry for Volunteer Healthcare Professionals (ESAR-VHP) that provides a registry for individuals who wish to volunteer to serve during an emergency or disaster. Healthcare professionals preregistered through DHV and activated for a disaster response are able to access the PULSE portal, with DHV providing the means for authentication and authorization to access protected health information electronically.

Intervention: EMSA conducted a PULSE exercise, designed to allow disaster healthcare volunteers to access health information through a web-based portal, and to allow healthcare professionals that may use the capabilities of PULSE, to search for and retrieve information from within their electronic health record systems or health information exchange systems. The primary objective of the PULSE Exercise was to conduct end user training of PULSE in a mock disaster environment in an Alternate Care Facility (ACF) to demonstrate, and evaluate the capabilities of PULSE in support of the workflow of healthcare volunteers at multiple ACF facilities. This training ensured connection was maintained between four Health Information organizations, and tested connectivity of the DHV system and Directory Services.

Impact: EMSA trained over 100 Disaster Healthcare workers on the PULSE System during this exercise which will enable correct use of PULSE in an ACF when needed. The PULSE exercise resulted in increased understanding of PULSE in medical surge response capabilities among healthcare partners and a discussion of coordinated patient care for the communities within the geographic hubs. PULSE addresses a unique need for timely and accurate health information about specific individuals who are disconnected from their regular healthcare support network due to a natural or man-made disaster.

Footnotes:

DR. Gettinger, Reflections from a Health IT Perspective on Disaster Response, Health IT Journal, 2017 May 15. Available www.healthit.gov/buzz-blog/health-it/reflections-health-perspective-disaster-response/