Outbreak preparedness scores reveal state and local-level weaknesses

The Ebola outbreak has exposed significant state and local-level vulnerabilities in the state of preparedness against infectious disease threats in the United States, according to Outbreaks: Protecting Americans from Infectious Diseases, a report released last month by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Trust for America's Health.

The report scores states on their ability to prevent, detect, diagnose and respond to outbreaks, including those from contaminated food, vaccination gaps, hospital-associated infections and emerging threats. Half of states and Washington, D.C., scored lower than 5 on a scale of 1 to 10, revealing significant weaknesses in emergency preparedness at the state and local level. (Sources: USA Today, Trust for America's Health)

Health crises start and are managed in local health departments and hospitals; therefore, strong emergency systems must be in place at these levels. These include continual training and practice for staff, development of protocols, and regional coordination to respond to outbreaks well before they reach threat level. To be adequately prepared, state and local health systems also must include a sufficient number of hospitals prepared to treat highly contagious patients while protecting the healthcare workers who are caring for them. (Source: Trust for America’s Health)

Access the report to learn how your state scored and assess how
and whether the weaknesses affect your operations.

Determine the role of local public health in ensuring your preparedness and ongoing involvement in exercising community capacity through your healthcare coalition. (Source: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response)

Review the current availability of training for healthcare workers on various aspects of emergency preparedness that address gaps identified in the report. (Sources: CDC, ASPR, Center for Domestic Preparedness)

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