

C A S P E R

Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response Team

Following any type of natural disaster, emergency event, or public health crisis, officials must be prepared to respond and meet the needs of the affected areas.

DSHS recognizes the need for a Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) Team that would be able to assess community-level public health needs following a public health emergency/disaster.

CASPER is an ESF 8 response and planning tool. It provides situational awareness to public health and emergency management officials to strengthen disaster response and public health preparedness planning efforts.

CASPER involves interviewing people in sampled households about their public health needs; these are door-to-door household surveys. These assessments provide valid population-based public health information about communities and helps define the scope and magnitude of specific public health needs. Local health officials use the results to identify health and service needs and hazards and target relief efforts.

Major CASPER Activities, 2009 – 2013, Texas

DSHS regional and central offices improved CASPER readiness and capabilities throughout the state. Below is a list of major activities:

- Responses
 - 2 post - disaster assessment
 - 3 non - disaster assessments
 - 2 STAR requests for CASPER resources submitted by local/regional public health officials
- Training
 - Regions and central office hosted regional workshops, attended by 37 local health departments and one tribal agency
 - Hosted a CDC/CSTE/NIOSH regional (U.S.) disaster epidemiology training
 - Instituted regular training for Central Office CASPER team members
 - Estimate ~ 150 public health employees across the state are CASPER trained
- Improved mapping and spatial analyses capabilities
- Improved website <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/commprep/disasterepi/casper.aspx>
- Pocket field guide (*version 1 and 2*) created:
 - Distributed hardcopies (400+) and also available on line
- Wafer cards created
 - Contains 240+ electronic resources for team positions
- Presentations
 - Numerous TX and national conferences
 - CDC sponsored trainings in 13 states
- Publications in peer review journals

