An Equity Driven Approach to Incident Command Structure (ICS):
Lessons Learned from the New Mexico Department of Health Vaccine Team

NASEM: Towards a Post-Pandemic World
Community Engagement and Public Health
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Case Study: Embedding vaccine equity into the ICS Structure
About New Mexico DOH

- NMDOH is a Centralized Department of Health
- Underfunded
- Has the most counties with highest social vulnerability index (SVI) in the U.S.
- Majority minority population
- Rural
Initial Vaccine Rollout

- New Mexico got off to a great start with Covid vaccine.
- Partners in National Guard, hospitals across the state, Indian Health Service and Public Health staff
- Centralized registration and scheduling app for vaccine
- Vaccine was distributed to providers with highest throughput.
Pre-ICS Vaccine Organizational Structure: Challenges

- Lack of clarity in roles
- Lack of coordinated communication both internally and externally
- Unclear chain of command
- Complexity of operations outgrew the existing structure
- Special population needs not addressed
- No easy way to expand the organizational structure
What is Incident Command Structure (ICS)?

- Model Tool for command, control and coordination of resources
- Management tool consisting of procedures for organizing:
  - Staff
  - Facilities
  - Equipment
  - Communications
Principles

- Common Terminology
- Modular Organization
- Management by Objectives
- Incident Action Planning
- Manageable Span of Control
- Incident Facilities and Locations
- Comprehensive Resource Management
- Integrated Communications
- Establishment and Transfer of Command
- Unified Command
- Chain of Command and Unity of Command
- Accountability
- Dispatch/ Deployment
- Information and Intelligence Management
2021 Timeline for ICS Transition

Jan. 22nd
Request for FEMA Support

Jan 24-30th
FEMA Evaluation of Existing Operations

Month of February
FEMA-DOH Adaptation of ICS w/Equity

March - to Present
Continued Implementation of ICS with Focus on Equity

Feb. 7th Equity Plan
Feb-March
FEMA Training, Coaching and Support of DOH ICS Team
Feb. 12th Joint Information Center (JIC) Established

Leadership Decision to Reorganize with ICS
Vaccine ICS Mission and Objectives

**Vaccine Mission:**
*Equitable Distribution* of the COVID-19 Vaccine to 1) decrease morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 and 2) preserve societal functioning.

**Community Facing:**
The Department of Health’s mission is to vaccinate New Mexicans swiftly, efficiently, and equitably in order to save lives and stop the spread of the virus.

**Objective 1:** Equitable distribution of vaccine across counties, zip codes, small areas, race and ethnicity.

**Objective 2:** Efficient distribution of at least 80% vaccine delivered each week.

**Objective 3:** Ensure safety and protection of all vaccination staff.

**Objective 4:** Conduct regular communication between all entities (internal and external).
Overall ICS Structure

UNIFIED COMMAND

INFORMATION OFFICER
SAFETY OFFICER
LIAISON OFFICER

LEGAL ADVISOR

COMMAND STAFF

OPERATIONS SECTION
- BRANCHES
- DIVISIONS
- GROUPS
- TEAMS
- TASK FORCES
- SINGLE RESOURCES

PLANNING/INTELLIGENCE SECTION
- RESOURCE UNITS
- SITUATION UNIT
- DEMOB UNIT
- DOCUMENTATION UNIT

LOGISTICS SECTION
- SERVICE BRANCH
- SUPPORT BRANCH
- PERSONNEL BRANCH

FINANCE / ADMIN. SECTION
- TIME UNIT
- PROCUREMENT UNIT
- COMPENSATION/CLAIMS UNIT
- COST UNIT
Equity Driven Organizational Structure

**Community Vaccine Equity Taskforce:**
- Community Guidance

**Joint Information Center:**
- Equity Messaging

**Unified Command**
- Equity SMART Objectives
  - To support Mission of equitable distribution of Vaccine to:
    - Decrease Morbidity and Mortality
    - Preserve Societal Function

**External Stakeholders**
- Governor's Office
- Cabinet Secretaries
- MAT
- VACCINE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Other External Stakeholders**
- City Mayors, County Administrators, Other State Agencies, Tribes & Pueblos, Private Sector

**Command Staff**
- Unified Command
- Department of Health Leadership
- Representatives of other organizations supporting the Incident Command activities
- Joint Information Center
- Unified Command
- Executive Team
- Public Information Officer
- Legal Advisor
- Safety Officer
- Liaison Officers

**General Staff**
- Operations Section
- Planning Section
- Logistics Section
- Finance Section
- Geographic Ops Branch
- Response Branch

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Equity Driven Vaccine Operations to Priority Populations

OPERATIONS SECTION

GEOGRAPHIC OPS BRANCH

NORTHWEST DIVISION
Public Health Regional Director
Emergency Managers
Vaccine Marshalls

NORTHEAST DIVISION
Public Health Regional Director
Emergency Managers
Vaccine Marshalls

SOUTHWEST DIVISION
Public Health Regional Director
Emergency Managers
Vaccine Marshalls

SOUTHEAST DIVISION
Public Health Regional Director
Emergency Managers
Vaccine Marshalls

RESPONSE BRANCH

SENIOR AND LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES
HOMEBOUND

SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN COLLEGES
TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

ESSENTIAL WORKERS
MINORITY POPULATIONS

CORRECTIONS JAILS AND PRISONS
IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE

PEOPLE EXP. HOMELINESSNESS
DISABILITIES

SERVICES / HOSPITALS / MCOs

ALLOCATIONS

REGISTRATION & SCHEDULING GROUP FOR APP

EVENTS SCHEDULING COORDINATOR

CALL CENTER GROUP

HEALTH EQUITY RESPONSE BRANCH

HEALTH PROMOTION MANAGERS

HEALTH COUNCILS (39)

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS (100)

COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

FAITH- BASED ORGANIZATIONS

ESSENTIAL WORKER BUSINESSES

MOBILE TEAMS

FEMA MOBILE UNITS

NEW MEXICO EQUITY TRAVEL (NET) TEAMS

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Operationalizing ICS to work towards health equity
ICS Data Team

- Inform Operations
- Focus on Equity
- Evaluate Objectives
- Integrate data systems
Using ICS to improve vaccine equity

- Identify Area of Concern
  - low vaccination rates in Latinx population

- Set Objectives:
  - Operationalize the equity plan

- Evaluate Data
  - feedback to the team

- Develop Strategies:
  - Prioritize scheduling for high SVI zip codes
  - CHWs Rapid Community Assessment
Community Assessments

Rapid Community Assessments conducted by NMDOH identified the largest barriers to getting vaccinated for urban populations in Albuquerque.
“River of COVID Vaccination” - Solutions

- Community Outreach: Connect to resources - food, housing, utilities, etc
- Community Vaccine Sites
- Paid Time Off
- Ability to leave and return to work
- Vaccine Sites with Extended Hours
- Workplace Vaccine Sites
- More Info! - Hotline - local phone #
- Registration Help
- Short wait
- In-person
- Language capacity
- Cost is FREE
- Support for side effects
Using ICS to improve vaccine equity

Identify Area of Concern
barriers to vaccine for Latinx - RCA

Set Objectives:
Allocate 1250 doses for Latinx

Develop Strategies:
FUMU and Mobile Teams
- extended hours
- walk-ins
- working with CHWs
- high SVI zip codes
- multiple vaccines at one site
- incentive - food bag

Evaluate Data
- Re-evaluate the data
- Feedback to team

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Data to inform where to Focus Efforts

- Mapping of SVI
- Mapping of Race/Ethnicity
- Mapping of COVID Cases

To Guide Operations for:

- Increasing coverage over time of High SVI area
- Increasing coverage of Hispanic/Latino, African American, Native American populations
- Increasing coverage of priority groups: Seniors, Healthcare Workers, Educators
FEMA Urban Mobile Unit

- extended hours
- working with CHWs
- high SVI zip codes
- multiple vaccines at one site
- incentive - food bag
FUMU DATA

Count of ethnicity 4.14.21

Zip code distribution - FUMU week 3

70% from high SVI zip codes
Improvements to Vaccine Equity Program

Messaging:
- Free
- No Need for ID
- No Need for Insurance
- Pictures of different racial/ethnic groups

Programming
- Call Center Now Registers AND Schedules People who call the hotline
- CHWs register and organize vaccine events
Closer to Community: NET Teams and FUMU Team

New Mexico Equity Travel Team (NET) Team

FEMA Urban Mobile Unit (FUMU) Type 5 Unit
Community Partnerships and Engagement

Community Members

CHWs

Local City and County Government

DOH

FEMA

National Guard

CDC

ALTS: Aging and Long Term Services

HSD: Human Service Dept.

Community Partners: CBOs, FBOs,

Community Hospitals, Clinics

Universities

Foundations

Non-profits
LEARNED LESSONS from our team

• **ICS can work** for public health
• **Leadership:** ICS provides a structure for equity driven decision-making
• **Mission:** Embed equity into ICS if you want results
• **Operations:** A dedicated equity team allows for responsive solutions
• **Community Engagement:** Partnerships are critical within the ICS structure
• **Planning:** Health equity data team in planning section is necessary to guide actions
• **Partnerships:** All partners have a place in the ICS: Cross-sector partnerships