

Burleson County: Coordination in Times of Crisis

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After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many communities were thankful that they had an emergency preparedness plan in place and designated emergency management coordinators to oversee the emergency response within their communities.

The 2005 hurricanes also provided an opportunity for emergency preparedness departments to reconsider their plans and adapt them based upon their experiences during the hurricane response. One area which many communities expanded upon was the listing of community resources available to support individuals and families affected by these types of events. Like many communities, Burleson County reached out to those resource holders – both organizational and individual to develop a partnership for emergency preparedness.

Lacking some of the amenities many larger communities possess, small communities usually depend upon the coordination of multiple community resources when faced with challenges – particularly in crisis situations. As a result of the 2005 hurricanes, the county-appointed Burleson Health Resource Commission wanted to ensure that the Burleson Health Resource

Centers in Caldwell and Somerville were among the community resources available during an emergency response situation. At the request of the Burleson County Health Resource Commission, Albert Ramirez, the BHRC service coordinator, worked with Brian Prescott, the Burleson County emergency preparedness contact, to guarantee they were a part of the Burleson County emergency preparedness plan.

As Hurricane Ike approached the Texas gulf coast, emergency response teams were initiated around the state. As the hurricane made landfall and weather conditions worsened, Mr. Prescott immediately contacted Mr. Ramirez to see how they could coordinate in the event that their community was impacted. Mr. Ramirez offered the resource center vans to help transport clients with special needs. Mr. Ramirez then contacted Kathy Jones and Pat Allen, the office managers of the



A horse grazes beside a house, surrounded by floodwater, near Winnie, Texas after Hurricane Ike. (AP Photo/Pool, Smiley N. Pool)

Burleson Health Resource Centers in Caldwell and Somerville, respectively. The office managers confirmed the availability of their van drivers, Bob Hardin and Mel Tinlenberg, who gladly agreed to volunteer to help those in crisis and coordinate with the county.

Mr. Prescott was given permission to contact the van drivers and office managers directly to arrange rides for special needs clients. When a call came into the county for an emergency, Mr. Prescott called the drivers to arrange the transport. Through this collaboration, they were able to help residents get to emergency shelters throughout Burleson County and into neighboring Brazos County. Many of the calls that came in were from residents who were either immobile

or reliant upon oxygen and had lost electricity. “The process ran very smoothly, and I was elated to see how well we could work together and to know those in need were getting help they otherwise might not have been able to receive,” said Kathy Jones.

Since the hurricane, the Burleson Health Resource Centers have had the opportunity purchase an additional van that will be used to offer more rides to Burleson County residents. The health resource center staff plans to continue working with Burleson County to further plan for emergency situations. “I am looking forward to additional coordination with the county on future emergencies and know that in the future we will be able to assist even more residents,” said Albert Ramirez.



American Public Health Association Annual Meeting

The American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting is the “oldest and largest gathering of public health professionals in the world.” The purpose of this conference is to “address current and emerging health science, policy, and practice issues in an effort to prevent disease and promote health.” This year’s conference focused on Public Health without Borders and was held in San Diego, California from October 25-29.

Faculty and staff of the Center for Community Health Development (CCHD) made 15 presentations and one poster session at this year’s conference, several involving affiliated faculty and students. CCHD is also sending a community partner and member of the BVHP Board, Albert Ramirez, to this year’s APHA annual meeting to present on service coordination.

The following is a list of individuals affiliated with the center and their presentations for the 136th APHA Annual Meeting.

Presentations

1. **Borders, S., Blakely, C.H.**** (2008) Adequate prenatal care: A geospatial examination of economic and non-economic barriers to utilization in Medicaid-managed care.
2. **Conkling, M., Blakely, C.H.****, **Burdine, J.N., Zuniga, M.A.** (2008) Population health status in colonias near McAllen, Texas: Can promotoras make a difference in health services utilization?
3. **Elliot, T.R.****, **Windwehen, L.M., Wendel, M.L., Alaniz, A., Burdine, J.N.** (2008) Utilizing technology to improve rural residents’ access to mental health services.
4. **Laditka, J.N., Beard, R.L., Bryant, L., Fetterman, D.J., Hunter, R.H., Ivey, S.L., Logsdon, R.G., Sharkey, J.R., Wu, B.** (2008) Promoting Cognitive Health: A formative research collaboration of the healthy aging research network.
5. **Laditka, S.B., Corwin, S.J., Laditka, J.N., Liu, R., Tseng, W., Wu, B., Beard, R.L., Sharkey, J.R., Ivey, S.L.** (2008) Views about aging well among a diverse group of older Americans: Implications for promoting cognitive health.
6. **Matthews, A.E., Sharkey, J.R., Wilcox, S., Laditka, S.B., Laditka, J.N., Logsdon, R.G., Sahyoun, N., Robare, J.F., Liu, R.** (2008) Perceptions and beliefs of the role of physical activity and nutrition on brain health in older adults.
7. **McLeroy, K.** (2008) Systems Thinking Theory Panel Paper #2.
8. **Ory, M.G., Liles, C., Alaniz, A., Wade, A., Gipson, R.*** (2008) Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging: The Brazos Valley.
9. **Ory, M.G., Sykes, K., Lawler, K.M., Chodzko-Zajko, W., Liles, C., Sarantino, W.** (2008) Environment, health, and aging: Promising new directions.
10. **Prochaska, J.†, Ory, M.G., Burdine, J.N.** (2008) A Rural-Urban Comparison of Older Adults’ Physical Activity in Central Texas.
11. **Ramirez, A.***, **Windwehen, L.M., Alaniz, A., Wendel, M.L.** (2008) Service coordination: A critical component of sustainable access to care for rural residents.
12. **Sharkey, J.R.** (2008) Poverty, Perceived Community Food Resources, and Insufficient Household Food Resources among Rural Older Adults.
13. **Sharkey, J.R., St. John, J.A., Sharf, B.**** (2008) “Una persona derichita (staying straight in the mind)”: Perceptions of Spanish-speaking Mexican-American older adults and promotoras in South Texas.
14. **Wehrly, R.†, Mier, N.****, **Ory, M.G., Prochaska, J.†, Hora, K., Wendel, M.L., St. John, J.A.** (2008) Confronting the diabetes disparity: A look at best practices in the Texas-Mexico border region.
15. **Wendel, M.L., Alaniz, A., Perkins, K.†, Sackett, S.†, Crowell, C.***, **Windwehen, L.M.** (2008) Developing a strategy for health coverage for the working uninsured.

Posters

1. **Liles, C., Ory, M.G., Hora, K.** (2008) Planning to build healthy gardens: What it takes to initiate and sustain such efforts.

Community members or partners are denoted by a single asterisk () after their name. Affiliated faculty members are denoted by a double asterisk (**) after their name. Students are denoted by a cross (†) after their name.*

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Student Researchers Address Disparities

The Program for Rural and Minority Health Disparities Research was funded by the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities in 2007 as a collaboration between the Center for the Study of Health Disparities at Texas A&M University and the Center for Community Health Development at the Texas A&M Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health. The program, focusing on rural and minority disparities—particularly in the areas of obesity and diabetes—aims to support the development of new disparities research (and researchers) in this area.

In spring 2008, the Center for Community Health Development (CCHD) set aside \$20,000 for the program to provide research mini-grants to graduate students conducting disparities-related research in the Brazos Valley for their theses/dissertations. Eight proposals were received and reviewed, and four student teams were awarded funding. Presented below are summaries of the research conducted by the student teams.

Fathers' Perceived Role as Health Liaisons for Childhood Obesity Prevention: An Exploratory Study

Vanessa M. Byrd, Principal Investigator
Matthew Lee Smith, Co-Principal Investigator

Overweight and obese children are at higher risk for obesity

and weight-related health conditions during adulthood. African American children and adults are over-represented among this at-risk group. Research shows parental involvement facilitates obesity prevention. Research exists on maternal influences on children's health, yet little exists on paternal influences. The purpose of this study is to identify and explore factors contributing to African American fathers' perceptions of their influence on their children's health practices. Focus groups were conducted. Resulting themes were included within a survey instrument to collect data about African American fathers' perceived role as health liaisons to their children.

Food Availability Influencing Nutrition-Related Health Disparities among Low-Income Families

Cheree Sisk, Principal Investigator

Nutrition-related health disparities among low-income families may be influenced by the type and amount of food available in the home. The Household Food Inventory project uses multiple in-home observational assessments to describe the household food environment (workable appliances, food storage, food preparation) and



document the type and amount of food items available in the home throughout a one-month period. A sample of thirty-two Hispanic, African American, and non-Hispanic White families in Brazos County participated in the two-phase project. In phase 1, household assessments were conducted once a week for five weeks among 10 families; in phase 2, 22 households were assessed three times over a 5-week period. Data from this project will be used for the development of protocol for a large food choice project in seven rural Texas counties.

Home and Community Factors Affecting Children's Physical Activity and Healthful Eating in the Summer

Sasha Fleary, Principal Investigator

During the three months of summer, parents have more responsibility over their pre-pubertal children's activities and eating habits when compared to the school year. One aim of this project is to assess how children and parents' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and barriers to physical activity and healthful eating impact children's physical activity and eating habits in the summer. A second aim of this project is to examine the extent to which community and environmental factors (e.g. accessibility, availability, affordability and knowledge of camps, neighborhood safety) encourage or hinder physical activity in the summer among underrepresented groups. To

achieve these aims, the study will be conducted in two phases: Phase 1 will include focus groups with mothers, and Phase 2 will include survey completion by mothers and their children.

Multicultural Assessment Validity: A Test of Complexity, Impartiality and Accuracy in the Case Conceptualization of African-American Male College Students

Helene Cook, Principal Investigator
Laura Pruitt-Stephens, Co-Principal Investigator

The investigators seek to test, through a quasi-experimental design, the comparison of a multicultural assessment validity procedure and a traditional assessment protocol. The study hopes to achieve an increase in proficiency among mental health providers that:

- 1) results in more efficacious case conceptualizations of African American males,
- 2) guides and assists practitioners in setting appropriate treatment goals and
- 3) devises appropriate intervention strategies.



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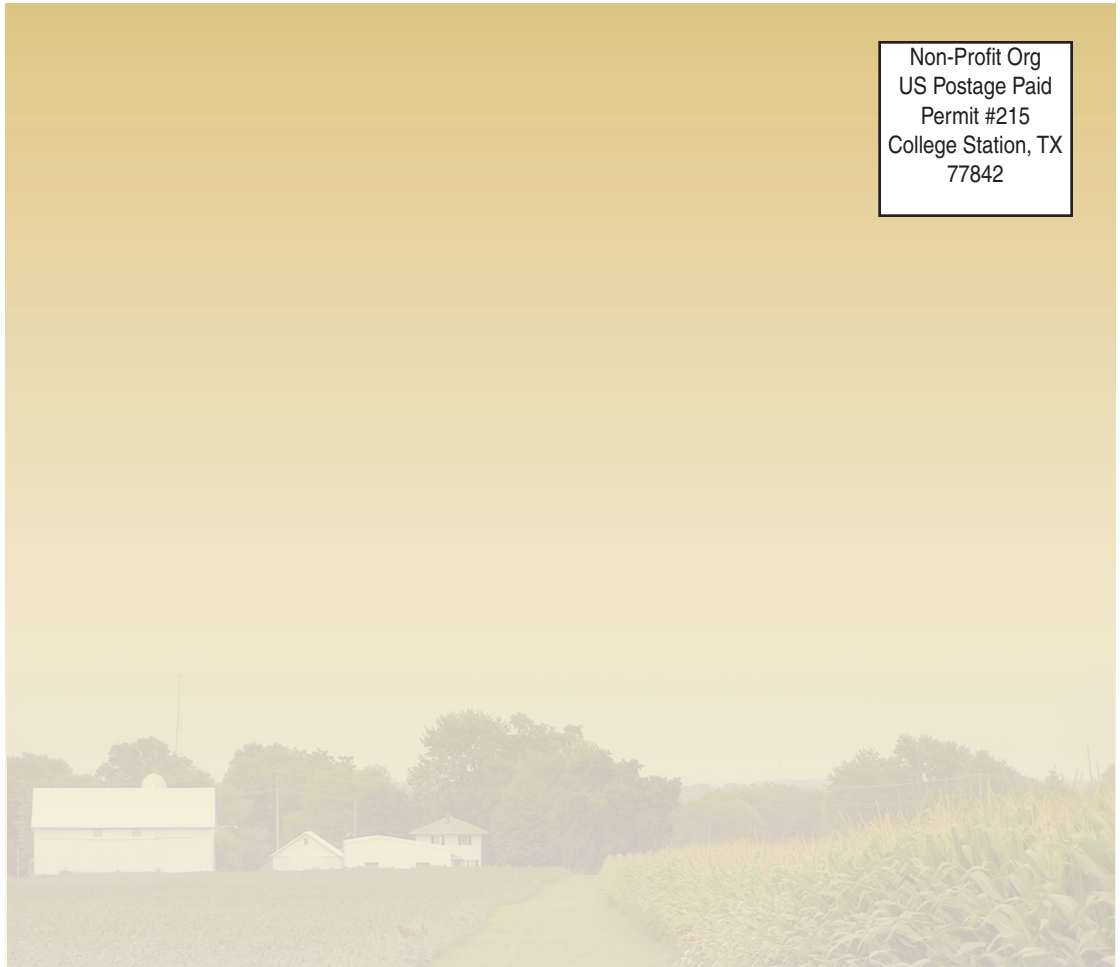
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Resources

The following resources are available for more information on the articles in this edition of *Communitas*:

American Public Health Association

<http://www.apha.org/meetings/>

Burleson County Health Resource Commission

http://bvhp.org/community_burleson.php

The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities

<http://ncmhd.nih.gov/>

Services

The Center for Community Health Development can be contracted to provide services, training, or technical assistance in the following areas:

- Strategic Planning
- Operational Planning
- Leadership Development
- Research Design
- Survey Construction
- Coalition Development
- Assessment
- Evaluation