

## RAND RESEARCH AREAS

THE ARTS  
 CHILD POLICY  
 CIVIL JUSTICE  
 EDUCATION  
 ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT  
 HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE  
 INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
 NATIONAL SECURITY  
 POPULATION AND AGING  
 PUBLIC SAFETY  
 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
 SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
 TERRORISM AND  
 HOMELAND SECURITY  
 TRANSPORTATION AND  
 INFRASTRUCTURE  
 WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE

This fact sheet is part of the  
 RAND Corporation research  
 brief series. RAND fact sheets  
 summarize published, peer-  
 reviewed documents.

Corporate Headquarters  
 1776 Main Street  
 P.O. Box 2138  
 Santa Monica, California  
 90407-2138  
 TEL 310.393.0411  
 FAX 310.393.4818

© RAND 2007

## Promoting Accountability in Public Health Emergency Preparedness

**S**ince 9/11 and the anthrax attacks that followed, the federal government has invested more than \$6 billion to improve the nation's readiness to respond to the health effects of bioterrorist attacks, natural disasters, pandemic influenza outbreaks, and other public health emergencies. Yet, lack of a clear definition of preparedness and validated measures makes it difficult to determine the impact of past funding, to promote accountability for public funds, and to set priorities for future investments. Recently, Congress and the president passed the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act, which requires development of performance standards and measures by 2009.

RAND Corporation research has identified the advantages and disadvantages of some approaches used to measure preparedness and suggested avenues for developing new preparedness tools. Among the study's key findings:

- Commonly used measurement approaches are insufficient.
  - Written assessments can be administered to a broad set of health departments. However, these assessments typically focus on resources or planning, but do not capture actual operational capability and often suffer from self-report bias.
  - Exercises and drills could be used to test operational capabilities, but are often costly and thus far have not been linked to clear performance standards and metrics.
- Further efforts are needed to link exercises to performance standards and metrics.
  - Developing clear national-level standards and metrics for performance in exercises can increase the usefulness of exercises in yielding information about preparedness.
  - Although all jurisdictions should strive to meet the same standards for preparedness, jurisdictions should be given some flexibility in determining *how* to meet the standards.
- Exercise-based assessments that are “embedded” in routine activities should be part of a new approach.
  - These assessments can be used to test core preparedness capabilities; for example, annual flu clinics might be used to test mass dispensing procedures.
  - Embedded assessments can reduce costs by eliminating the need to assemble key staff for the sole purpose of exercising.
- Preparedness standards and metrics will have to rely on nontraditional sources of evidence.
  - The weak evidence base for public health preparedness probably precludes the development of the kind of evidence-based standards that have been developed for personal health care.
  - However, process mapping, computer simulations, expert judgment, and other analyses can be used together to support the initial development of standards and metrics.

Office of Congressional Relations | 703-413-1100 x5320 | [ocr@rand.org](mailto:ocr@rand.org) | [www.rand.org/congress](http://www.rand.org/congress)

---

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

**RAND Offices**

Santa Monica, CA • Washington, DC • Pittsburgh, PA • Jackson, MS / New Orleans, LA • Cambridge, UK • Doha, QA



# HEALTH

THE ARTS  
CHILD POLICY  
CIVIL JUSTICE  
EDUCATION  
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT  
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
NATIONAL SECURITY  
POPULATION AND AGING  
PUBLIC SAFETY  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
TERRORISM AND  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE

This PDF document was made available from [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org) as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world.

---

## Support RAND

[Browse Books & Publications](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

## For More Information

Visit RAND at [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org)

Explore [RAND Health](#)

View [document details](#)

## Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Unauthorized posting of RAND PDFs to a non-RAND Web site is prohibited. RAND PDFs are protected under copyright law. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see [RAND Permissions](#).