



PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT



In an era of increasing environmental uncertainties, natural disasters, and public health emergencies, health centers (HCs) face unprecedented challenges in maintaining critical healthcare services. These frontline institutions serve populations often most at-risk during crisis situations, making their resilience and adaptability paramount. Partnerships have emerged as a strategic imperative, transforming how HCs prepare for, respond to, and recover from disruptive events.

The landscape of emergency response is complex and multifaceted, requiring more than individual organizational capacity. By forging strategic collaborations across sectors, health centers can create robust, flexible networks that not only survive disruptions but also emerge stronger. These partnerships represent more than mere resource sharing—they are dynamic ecosystems of support, knowledge exchange, and collective resilience.

By understanding and implementing strategic partnership models, HCs can position themselves as adaptive, responsive institutions capable of meeting the most challenging healthcare demands.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT:

1. Review the Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies for Building Partnerships.
2. List current partners and use Types of Partners list to identify additional prospective partners.
3. Use the Partnership Development Worksheet to begin mapping out how you can work together.
4. Use the Talking Points to initiate dialogue.
5. Use the MOU to formalize your partnership.

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BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIPS

1. Increased Resource Access

- Critical medical supplies and equipment.
- Supplemental personnel and expertise.
- Expanded financial and material support during emergencies.
- Additional funding streams.

2. Enhanced Operational Capabilities

- Improved emergency management coordination.
- Streamlined communication networks.
- Integrated response strategies across organizations.
- More efficient deployment of resources and personnel.

3. Expanded Community Reach

- Ability to serve broader and more diverse populations.
- Targeted interventions for underserved community segments.
- Extended geographic coverage during crisis situations.
- Comprehensive needs assessment and response mechanisms.

4. Knowledge and Expertise Sharing

- Cross-organizational learning opportunities.
- Access to specialized emergency response skills.
- Transfer of best practices in disaster preparedness.
- Multidisciplinary approach to community health challenges.

5. Community Resilience Building

- Strengthened local emergency response infrastructure.
- Improved long-term recovery strategies.
- Enhanced community preparedness and adaptation capabilities.
- Development of sustainable support networks.

6. Organizational Visibility and Credibility

- Increased recognition of Health Centers.
- Stronger stakeholder relationships.
- Potential for future collaborative opportunities.
- Demonstrated commitment to community welfare.

CHALLENGES OF PARTNERSHIPS

1. Organizational Alignment Barriers

- Conflicting priorities and strategic goals.
- Divergent organizational cultures.
- Competing institutional interests.
- Misaligned performance metrics and expectations.

2. Communication and Coordination Complexities

- Fragmented communication channels.
- Inconsistent information sharing protocols.
- Challenges in real-time coordination during emergencies.
- Technological and infrastructural communication gaps.

3. Trust and Relationship Dynamics

- Initial institutional skepticism.
- Limited historical collaboration experience.
- Concerns about organizational transparency.
- Perceived competitive threats.

4. Resource Management Challenges

- Limited funding and resource allocation.
- Unequal distribution of financial burdens.
- Competing resource priorities.
- Complex procurement and sharing mechanisms.

5. Regulatory and Compliance Obstacles

- Diverse legal and regulatory frameworks.
- Complex inter-organizational compliance requirements.
- Bureaucratic approval processes.
- Potential liability and risk management concerns.



6. Operational and Logistical Barriers

- Geographical and infrastructural limitations.
- Inconsistent emergency response readiness.
- Storage and equipment sharing constraints
- Technological integration challenges.

7. Strategic and Cultural Impediments

- Resistance to organizational change.
- Limited understanding of partnership value.
- Complex approval process.
- Lack of formal collaboration structures.

8. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- Insufficient community representation.
- Limited local stakeholder buy-in.
- Inadequate needs assessment processes.
- Weak community feedback mechanisms.

9. Knowledge and Expertise Gaps

- Uneven skill distribution.
- Limited cross-organizational training.
- Inconsistent emergency management expertise.
- Siloed professional development approaches.

10. Long-term Sustainability Challenges

- Short-term partnership focus.
- Difficulty maintaining momentum.
- Limited strategic planning.
- Unclear long-term collaboration objectives.



STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

1. Identify Key Stakeholders

Conduct a thorough analysis of the local landscape to identify the most relevant and influential organizations that can contribute to disaster response, such as government agencies, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and private sector entities.

2. Establish Relationships Early

Don't wait for a disaster to strike - proactively build relationships with potential partners well in advance. Attend community meetings, participate in local planning initiatives, and schedule introductory meetings to introduce your health center and discuss potential areas of collaboration.

3. Emphasize Shared Interests

When reaching out to partners, highlight the common goals and shared interests you have in ensuring the community's well-being and resilience during emergencies. Emphasize how your partnership can leverage each organization's strengths and resources.

4. Communicate Clearly and Transparently

Be clear and transparent about your health center's capabilities, resources, and the specific ways you envision the partnership can benefit the community. Provide detailed information about your disaster response plans and the role you hope the partner can play.

5. Offer Tangible Support

Rather than just asking for help, propose concrete ways your health center can support the partner organization's own disaster response efforts. This could include providing medical services to displaced communities, deploying mobile units, offering trusted communications to health center communities, or distributing supplies.

6. Emphasize Mutual Benefit

Demonstrate how the partnership will be mutually beneficial, with both organizations gaining valuable resources, expertise, and access to new networks and communities. Highlight the unique contributions each partner can make.

7. Establish Formal Agreements

Consider formalizing the partnership through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or other written agreement that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each party. This can help ensure accountability and long-term commitment.

8. Engage in Joint Planning

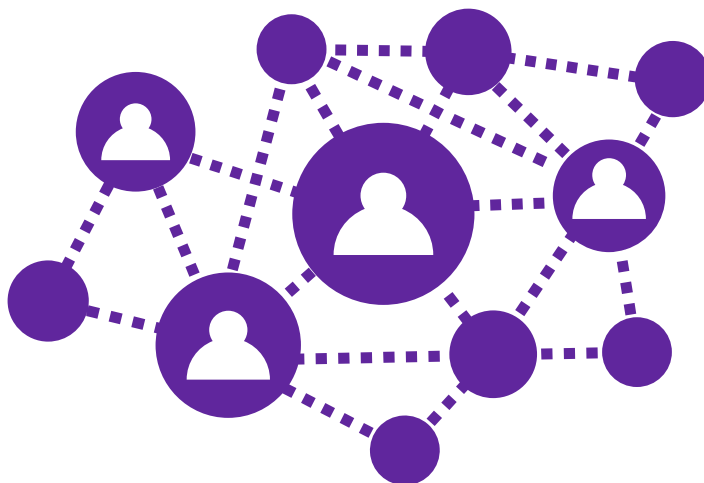
Invite potential partners to participate in your health center's disaster planning and preparedness activities, such as tabletop exercises, emergency drills, and strategic planning sessions. This fosters a collaborative approach and builds trust.

9. Leverage Existing Connections

If your health center already has strong relationships with certain organizations, leverage those connections to facilitate introductions and build bridges with new potential partners. Existing trusted relationships can help open doors.

10. Maintain Ongoing Communication

Regularly communicate with your partners, even during non-disaster periods, to maintain the relationship, share updates, and explore new opportunities for collaboration. This helps ensure the partnership remains strong and responsive when a crisis arises.



TYPES OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

1. Emergency Management Agencies

- Coordinate emergency response and recovery activities.
- Participate in disaster preparedness and mitigation planning.
- Provide training and technical assistance.

2. Public Health Departments

- Coordinate on disease surveillance outbreak response, and other public health programs.
- Collaborate on vaccination and immunization campaigns.
- Share epidemiological data and best practices.

3. Local Government Agencies

- Coordinate emergency planning and response efforts.
- Collaborate on resource allocation and distribution.
- Ensure compliance with local regulations and policies.

4. Community-Based Organizations

- Assist with outreach and engagement of vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations.
- Provide access to care for all people services and support for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).
- Speak up for the needs of the community during disaster response and recovery.

5. Volunteer and Civic Organizations

- Recruit and coordinate volunteers for various disaster response tasks.
- Provide training and support for volunteers.
- Assist with the distribution of supplies and services.

6. Nonprofit Organizations

- Provide additional resources and support services for vulnerable populations.
- Assist with volunteer coordination and community outreach.
- Collaborate on fundraising and donation management.

7. Faith-based Organizations

- Offer community spaces for emergency shelters or distribution centers.
- Provide emotional and spiritual support to affected individuals and families.
- Assist with the distribution of essential supplies and services.

8. Private Sector Partners

- Donate medical supplies, equipment, or financial resources.
- Provide logistical support for transportation and distribution of aid.
- Offer in-kind services or expertise in areas such as IT, communications, or logistics.

9. Educational Institutions

- Collaborate on research and data analysis related to disaster response.
- Provide training and educational opportunities for healthcare professionals.
- Engage students in volunteer and internship programs.

10. Media Partners

- Disseminate public health information and emergency updates.
- Raise awareness about the role and services of health centers.
- Facilitate communication between the health center and the community.



PARTNERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Instructions:

1. Identify the organizations you are interested in partnering with.
2. List what you can offer them in the partnership.
 - a. Consider broader community needs before, during, and after a disaster.
3. List what you would like from them in a partnership.
 - c. Think about limitations in your own response and how community partners can help fill those gaps.
4. Use this information as a foundation for dialogue.

<i>Prospective Partner</i>	<i>What Health Center Can Offer</i>	<i>What Health Center Need</i>
Ex: Local emergency management	Ex: Provide health care in emergency shelter	Ex: Equipment and supplies such as tables, chairs, privacy screens

TALKING POINTS

How do you start the conversation?

- Emphasize your shared mission and values. Highlight how partnering can help you better serve the community and achieve your collective goals.
- Acknowledge the expertise and resources that other organizations bring to the table. Express your desire to learn from their experiences and collaborate.
- Propose a specific area of collaboration that aligns with the partner's priorities. This shows you've done your research and have a clear vision for the partnership.
- Offer to host an initial meeting to discuss potential areas of collaboration and next steps. This demonstrates your proactive approach. Include a tour of the health center with an overview of the health center's services to help prospective partners better understand what you do, how you work, and who you serve.

How do you address hesitancy about engaging in a partnership?

- Highlight the benefits the partnership can bring to the other organization. Explain how it can help them expand their reach, access new funding sources, or enhance their services.
- Emphasize your commitment to being a reliable and engaged partner. Assure them that you are willing to invest time and resources to make the partnership successful.
- Acknowledge any past challenges or hesitations they may have had with partnerships. Propose strategies to address those concerns and build trust.
- Suggest starting with participating in a health center exercise as an observer, a small-scale way to demonstrate your ability to collaborate effectively. This can help build confidence and pave the way for a more extensive partnership.
- Offer to be flexible and adapt to the partner's needs and preferences. This shows your willingness to accommodate their concerns and work together.

What are the key messages to focus on?

- "We share a common mission to improve the health and well-being of our community. Partnering can help us achieve this goal more effectively."
- "Your expertise and resources in [specific area] would be invaluable in enhancing our disaster response capabilities. We're eager to learn from your experiences and collaborate."
- "We understand that past partnerships may have presented challenges. We're committed to being a transparent and reliable partner, and we're open to discussing strategies to address any concerns you may have."
- "A pilot project focused on [specific initiative] could be a great way for us to demonstrate our ability to work together and build a foundation for a more extensive partnership."



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) TEMPLATE

Instructions:

1. Customize the template to your specific local context.
 - a. This template uses sample language that should be updated appropriately to the specific partnership.
2. Have legal counsel review the document.
3. Ensure all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities.
4. Establish a regular review and update process.
5. Develop the appendices with specific, actionable details.

Sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Between

[Health Center Name]
[Health Center Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Phone Number]
[Email Address]

And

[Local Emergency Management Agency Name]
[Agency Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Phone Number]
[Email Address]

Effective Date: [Insert Date]

Expiration Date: [Insert Date, if applicable]

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to establish a collaborative framework between [Health Center Name] and [Local Emergency Management Agency Name] to enhance emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts during public health emergencies and disasters. This MOU aims to leverage existing hazard tracking resources and ensure coordinated efforts in safeguarding community health.

2. Background

In light of increasing public health threats and natural disasters, it is essential for health centers and emergency management agencies to work together effectively. This MOU outlines the roles, responsibilities, and commitments of both parties to ensure a unified response to emergencies affecting the community.

3. Objectives

- To establish a clear communication protocol between [Health Center Name] and [Local Emergency Management Agency Name].
- To share resources, information, and expertise related to emergency preparedness and response.
- To coordinate training and exercises to enhance the capabilities of both organizations.
- To ensure timely access to hazard tracking resources and data during emergencies.
- To develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to community health emergencies.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 [Health Center Name] Responsibilities:

- Provide medical expertise and support during emergencies.
- Share relevant health data and information with the Local Emergency Management Agency.
- Participate in joint training exercises and emergency response drills.
- Maintain readiness to respond to public health emergencies as outlined in the health center's emergency response plan.
- Designate primary and backup emergency contact personnel with 24/7 availability.
- Develop and maintain secure communication channels for information exchange.
- Comply with all relevant data protection and privacy regulations, including HIPAA.

4.2 *[Local Emergency Management Agency Name] Responsibilities:*

- Facilitate communication and coordination between local agencies during emergencies.
- Provide hazard tracking resources and data to [Health Center Name].
- Include [Health Center Name] in emergency planning and response meetings.
- Support joint training initiatives and exercises.
- Establish and maintain a centralized communication system for emergency coordination.
- Provide timely updates on potential and active emergency situations.
- Ensure compliance with local, state, and federal emergency management regulations.

5. Communication and Information Sharing

5.1 Both parties agree to establish and maintain open lines of communication through:

- Quarterly coordination meetings.
- Secure digital communication platforms.
- Designated emergency contact protocols.
- Annual joint emergency response planning sessions.

5.2 Information Sharing Guidelines:

- All shared information shall be treated as confidential.
- Data exchange will occur through secure, encrypted channels
- Sensitive information will be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- Compliance with HIPAA and other relevant privacy regulations is mandatory.

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

6.1 Both parties agree to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information shared during the course of this MOU, in accordance with:

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- State and federal privacy regulations.
- Professional ethical standards.

6.2 Each party shall:

- Implement appropriate technical and organizational measures to protect shared data.
- Restrict access to sensitive information.
- Immediately report any potential data breaches.
- Destroy or return sensitive information when no longer required.

7. Communication and Information Sharing

7.1 Each party shall bear its own costs associated with MOU implementation.

7.2 Joint training and exercise expenses may be shared proportionally, as mutually agreed upon.

7.3 No financial compensation is implied or guaranteed by this MOU.

8. Liability and Indemnification

8.1 Each party shall be responsible for its own actions and potential liabilities.

8.2 Neither party shall be held liable for actions outside their agreed-upon responsibilities.

8.3 Parties agree to maintain appropriate insurance coverage.

9. Duration, Termination, and Review

9.1 Duration

- This MOU shall remain in effect from effective date until [insert expiration date]
- The agreement will be automatically reviewed annually

9.2 Termination

- Either party may terminate this MOU with [insert notice period, e.g., 30 days] written notice
- Termination shall not interrupt ongoing emergency response activities
- A transition plan must be developed if termination occurs during an active emergency

9.3 Performance and Evaluation

- Annual joint review to assess:
 - Effectiveness of emergency preparedness efforts.
 - Joint training and response capabilities.
 - Information sharing protocols.
 - Identified improvements in emergency response.

10. Dispute Resolution

10.1 Dispute Resolution Process:

- Initial attempts to resolve conflicts through direct communication.
- Escalation to senior leadership if initial resolution fails.
- Potential use of mediation by a neutral third party.
- Legal action considered only as a last resort.

11. Amendments

11.1 This MOU may be amended or modified only by:

- Written agreement signed by authorized representatives of both parties.
- Mutual consent of both organizations.
- Documented through formal amendment attachments.

12. Compliance and Regulatory Requirements

12.1 Both parties agree to comply with:

- Local emergency management regulations.
- State and federal health emergency protocols.
- Relevant privacy and data protection laws.
- Professional standards for emergency response.

13. Signatures

By signing below, the parties agree to the terms and conditions outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding.

For [Health Center Name]:

[Name]

[Title]

[Date]

For [Local Emergency Management Agency Name]:

[Name]

[Title]

[Date]

Appendices (to be developed and attached):

1. Emergency Contact List
2. Communication Protocols
3. Joint Training Schedule
4. Data Sharing Guidelines
5. Incident Response Flowchart

Disclaimer: This template is a general guide and must be customized to fit the specific needs and legal requirements of the parties involved. It is advisable to consult legal counsel before finalizing any MOU.

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