

Role of WRHA Public Health Nurse (PHN) Responder in an Emergency or Disaster

In the event of an emergency or disaster the WRHA Regional Incident Command Team may require the assistance of PHNs. PHNs responding will take direction from and report back to the designated Team Manager (TM) or person in charge of the response, e.g., ICS structure or a different TM. The PHN keeps their respective team manager apprised of their involvement.

The PHN responder's core functions are to: assess, identify, and triage the population's health needs, connect individuals to care as required and advocate / help them to navigate systems as needed.

Responder responsibilities include:

- PHN obtains “**PPH Go-Bags**” & **File-in-a-Box**” containing clinical and administrative supplies for use in response to emergencies/disasters. [See PPH Emergency Preparedness and Response site.](#)
- Reports to the designated Reception Centre where Emergency Social Services (registration / inquiry, financial, food, lodging and Specialized Services) are being provided. This may be a private hotel, public recreation centre / facility or a temporary shelter.
- Supports, assists, and collaborates with other responders / agencies at the Reception Centre to address issues / provide services to those affected by the emergency or disaster.
- PHN initiates contact with the population affected by the disaster to:
 - Proactively assess and identify the population's needs.
 - Provide support / reassurance to individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, grief or difficulty coping.
 - Identify and triage those with potential health needs, e.g.; mothers with young children, children unaccompanied by adults, pregnant women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, those with communicable or chronic illnesses, those in need of medications, and those who are experiencing acute mental health concerns.
- Provides health teaching, support, and advocacy for those in need as well as referral to appropriate community resources within the scope of PHN practice.
- Assesses and provides standard first aid / advice as needed to manage minor injuries and illnesses within the scope of PHN practice.
- Plans for further intervention, coordinates and connects individuals with care / specialized services as required: e.g. CD Coordinator, primary care, paramedic unit, clinical pharmacist, diabetes management, wound care, Urgent Care, Mental Health Crisis Response Centre, emergency care.
- Documents significant contacts with clients and completes documentation using designated documentation forms.
- Evaluates if further interventions are required to ensure successful connection with appropriate resources for community / individuals affected by the disaster.
- Returns documentation to a designated TM who is responsible to return this documentation to central PPH Office at 490 Hargrave (c/o lead admin for Public Health Initiatives Leader) for storage.

Following the support provided by PHNs, WRHA Managers/Directors may be called upon to support with the following activities:

- Participate in the evaluation of services provided during the emergency or disaster.
- Notifying the Manager of Facilities and Support Services (MFSS) that the emergency/disaster “Go-Bags” / file boxes were deployed, so supplies are promptly re-stocked for future use.
- MFSSs to diarize / ensure list & supplies are checked and restocked at least annually every May.