

# Delivering quality technical assistance for local health department pandemic influenza planning

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## Introduction

In 2006, the North Carolina Division of Public Health requested that each of the state's 85 local health departments develop a pandemic influenza plan by March 2007. To support the planning process, the Division requested that the North Carolina Center for Public Health Preparedness (NCCPHP) provide technical assistance to local health departments.

## Methods

Based on NACCHO planning guidance (*Local Health Department Guide to Pandemic Influenza Planning Version 1.0*), NCCPHP and the Division of Public Health jointly developed a list of essential elements to be included in local pandemic influenza plans.

After distributing this guidance, NCCPHP initiated a technical assistance program that included:

- In-county visits with local health department planners,
- Regional planning workshops,
- A statewide planning workshop,
- A 6-week online pandemic influenza preparedness course,
- A web-based resource center,
- An email listserv, and
- Review of draft plans.

## Evaluation

NCCPHP distributed a baseline survey via email to all preparedness coordinators in October 2006 to determine pandemic influenza plan status, planning barriers, and technical assistance needs. A similar follow-up survey was conducted after the plan deadline assessing progress toward planning goals.

In May 2007, the Division of Public Health conducted an evaluation survey measuring local health department satisfaction with NCCPHP technical assistance.

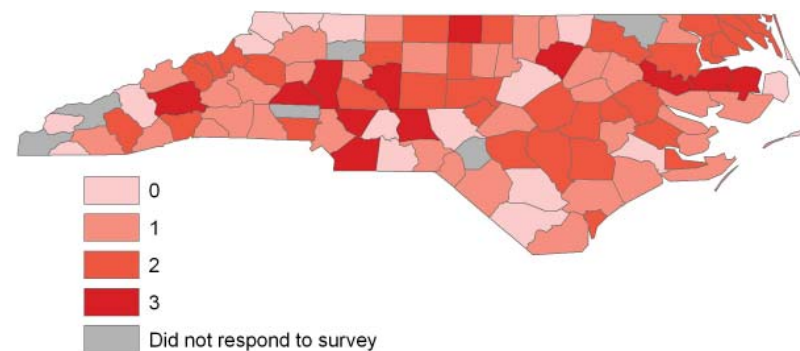
## Results

A total of 98% of local health departments (83 of 85) submitted a pandemic influenza plan to the NCCPHP/Division of Public Health review team by the plan submission deadline.

Response rates for the baseline and follow-up surveys were both 93% (79 of 85 local health departments). The response rate for the evaluation survey was 75% (64 of 85 agencies).

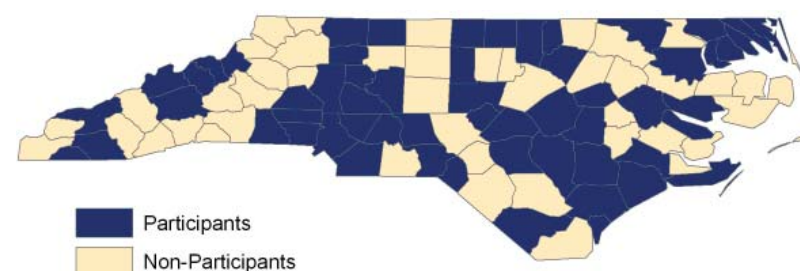
### County participation in in-person technical assistance activities

NCCPHP offered in-person technical assistance (in-county visits, regional workshops, and a statewide workshop) to local health departments throughout the state; 65 agencies (76%) reported participating in at least 1 in-person activity and 36 agencies (42%) reported participating in 2 or more in-person activities.



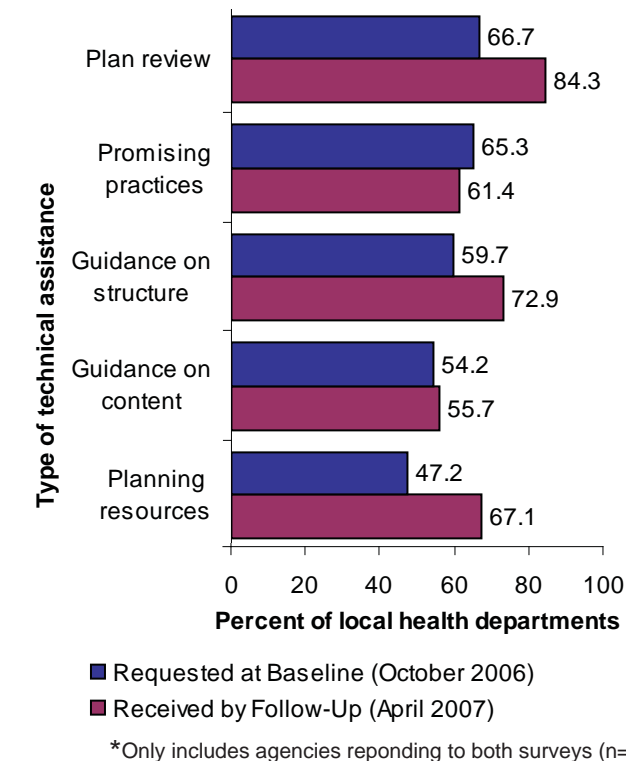
### Participation in online course, fall 2006-spring 2007

Representatives from 48 agencies (56%) completed the pan flu online course in fall 2006 or spring 2007. In addition, more than half of respondents reported accessing the online resource center (55%) and participating in the preparedness listserv (53%).

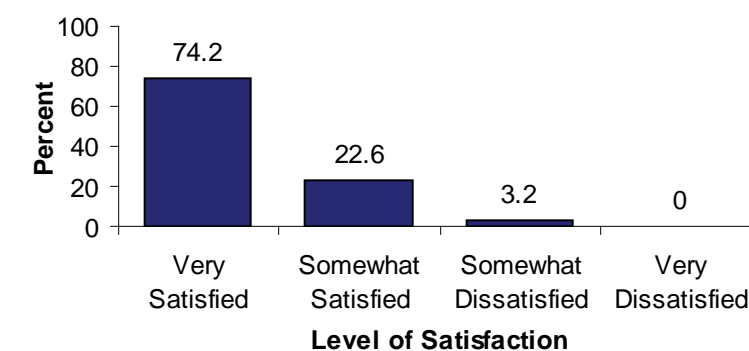


### Types of technical assistance desired and received by local agencies\*

Local health departments were asked at baseline what types of assistance they would like to receive to write a pandemic influenza plan and what types of assistance they actually received in the follow-up survey. For all types of assistance other than promising practices, the number of agencies receiving each type of assistance exceeded the number of agencies that requested it at baseline.



### Overall satisfaction with pandemic influenza technical assistance, May 2007



## How did technical assistance from NCCPHP help the planning process?

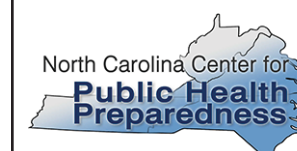
Local health department responses:

- “The assistance I received from the NCCPHP team was very helpful. The information and guidance has been the best help we have received so far.”
- “Any time I had a question, I could email or talk to someone at NCCPHP and receive an answer to my question in a timely manner.”
- “The on-site visits helped my team see and hear directly what we needed.”
- “The review and feedback were very valuable; it gave us positive reinforcement on the things we had done correctly and gave us specific guidance in those areas we needed to expand.”

## Conclusions

Local health departments may benefit from a pandemic influenza planning technical assistance program, as a supplement to state and federal pandemic influenza guidance.

The NCCPHP/Division of Public Health pandemic influenza technical assistance program was successful in providing agencies with assistance desired at baseline. A diverse set of technical assistance offerings combining face-to-face planning meetings with distance-based methodologies such as an online course allows greater agency flexibility and participation.



The North Carolina Center for Public Health Preparedness (NCCPHP) is housed in the North Carolina Institute for Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health. NCCPHP offers a variety of training activities and technical support to local and state public health agencies.

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