



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

January 31, 2014

Dear Preparedness Partners:

In January of 2013 the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), Office of Preparedness and Response (OP&R), began working to develop a communications plan for Emergency Support Function-8, Health and Medical Services. To assist in this effort, a Communications Advisory Group (CAG) was formed in July of that year. The CAG consists of representatives from local health departments, state facilities, and hospitals from across the state. Volunteer representatives for each group from every region were selected to account for varying operational needs and processes, and to ensure applicability of the resulting plan to all regions.

Since August of 2013, the CAG has been meeting monthly to revise the ESF-8 Communications Plan (ESFCP) and to put in place a statewide, regionally based, testing calendar for specified redundant communications platforms. Specifically, the CAG has been instrumental in establishing communications testing guidelines and identifying best practices for the utilization of communications equipment during training and real world situations.

DHMH, OP&R has published the final draft of the ESF-8 Communications Plan to HAN, along with a comment form to be utilized by all partner organizations to provide feedback and address any concerns. The ESF-8 Communications Plan and comment form can be accessed by logging in to HAN: Documents/Communications/ESF-8 Communications Plan. ESF-8 partners who wish to provide input on the plan may do so by completing the comment form and submitting it to the mailbox provided below by February 28, 2014. DHMH, OP&R will collect, tabulate, and analyze all received comments, and present them to the CAG for discussion and adjudication. Final edits to the plan will be made following this process. Preparedness partners can expect to see a final working version of the plan published to HAN by March 31, 2014.

As with all preparedness and response plans maintained by DHMH, the ESF8CP will undergo yearly reviews and updates to ensure it reflects the most current realities and needs of the ESF-8 community. To this end, the CAG will continue to meet on a regular schedule and membership will be rotated to ensure all ESF-8 partners have a chance to represent their region or organization and provide their unique perspectives to the group.

Mailbox for submission of comment form: DHMH.COMMPLAN@maryland.gov

Sincerely,

Sherry B. Adams
Director, DHMH Office of Preparedness and Response