

# Collaborating to Focus on Priority Risks in Southern California

High-population, high-threat urban areas face unique public health emergency risks. Recognizing this, PHPR awarded 10 major urban areas, including Los Angeles (L.A.) County, additional PHEP funds for a risk-based initiative—an all-hazards public health risk reduction pilot project. The goal of this project was to promote and accelerate the development of strategies and methodologies that lead to health hazard assessment and planning in order to mitigate the public health risks associated with higher population areas.

L.A. County's 10 million residents live in 88 cities spread across a little over 4,000 square miles of urban, suburban, and remote rural communities. It is also extremely diverse with 36% of the county's population born outside of the United States, over 200 different languages spoken, and more than half of residents speaking a language other than English at home. In addition, 17% of the population lives below the poverty level, and approximately 60,000 people are homeless.

The risk-based initiative involved the four public health departments (L.A. and Orange Counties, Long Beach, and Pasadena) that made up the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim (SoCal) metropolitan statistical area (MSA). The SoCal MSA Planning Collaborative worked extensively to:

- assess and prioritize its risks across government, communities, health care, businesses, responders, schools, and volunteer agencies and
- jointly plan how best to mitigate those hazards to protect southern California's diverse population.

Using the risk-based initiative funds, the SoCal MSA developed the Health Hazard Assessment and Prioritization (hHAP) tool to conduct a whole-community, public health focused assessment of 62 potential hazards facing southern California. The hHAP tool was built using an existing Kaiser Permanente tool and was designed to be flexible, adaptive, and applicable to any other health jurisdiction. It creates risk scores by multiplying probability, health severity, and health system impacts, adjusted by agency and community resources. This assessment is to improve public health readiness, response, and recovery plans and PHEP capability development for prioritized risks.

Using the hHAP tool, L.A. County narrowed the 62 health hazards to a priority list of 20 that they will be completing hazard-specific plans for over the next 5 years. Inspired by FEMA's Whole Community Planning focus, the County will be using this prioritized list to engage and partner with stakeholder agencies and organizations from across the community to develop readiness, response, and recovery plans and systems to improve the County's emergency capabilities. Using hHAP, in conjunction with existing all-hazards plans, will help ensure Southern California is prepared to respond to and recover from its highest risks, ultimately preventing disease and saving lives.