

Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness

SUCCESS STORY

SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Working Together & Being Proactive Produces Results

Contributor: Kathy Criss

“The Summit opened our eyes...”

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness was held in December 2010. Since then, the focus has been to successfully implement a statewide United Way 2-1-1* Information Center, the lack of which was cited as a “Gap” by multiple sectors during the afternoon “Gaps, Gives & Gets” brainstorming session at the Summit.

Broadening the Committee to reflect the Meta-Leadership Audience

Kathy Criss, Director of Preparedness Operations for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and United Way 2-1-1 Advisory Committee member, believes that the Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness influenced planning for the 2-1-1 Call Center in two important ways. First, there has been a broader solicitation of Advisory Committee members post-summit than there had been before. “The Summit opened our eyes to the range of businesses and agencies that could benefit from and contribute to the implementation.” At the same time, “During the breakout session of our Meta Leadership Summit, I learned that the VOAD groups [Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster] were not well tied into our emergency planning processes. Now, various VOAD groups are represented on the Pennsylvania 2-1-1 Southwest Advisory Committee. Through the planning and implementation of this program, we will strengthen these relationships. Without making the committee too large, we have been able to reach out to representatives of key special needs populations, emergency services and voluntary agencies to achieve a unique and balanced committee,” Criss says.

Proactive Approach Reduces Risk During Recent Floods

The second way in which the Summit influenced the United Way 2-1-1 Call Center implementation plan was a subtle shift in focus. Criss noted, “We decided it was important to look at post-emergency needs from the beginning. We are adding emergency management and recovery information now, rather than building a typical 2-1-1 Center first and retrofitting it in the aftermath of a disaster.” One example of the efficacy of this approach was evidenced during recent flooding in Bradford County. Having a special needs registry readily available facilitated the timely and safe evacuation of a group of nursing home residents. Photos taken just two hours after their evacuation vividly illustrated that boats would have been needed had there been a delay in response.

* Pennsylvania has been divided into seven regions, each of which will host a United Way 2-1-1 Call Center. Call centers are operational in the Capital, part of the East (Lancaster and Berks counties), the Southeast, and the Southwest regions. The remaining regions are expected to be working by 2012.

The Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness empowered business, government and nonprofit leaders to act together in times of crisis. The five-year initiative connected 5,000 business, government and nonprofit leaders in 36 communities. For resources and more information about Meta-Leadership visit the [CDC Foundation Meta-Leadership Website](#).



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