

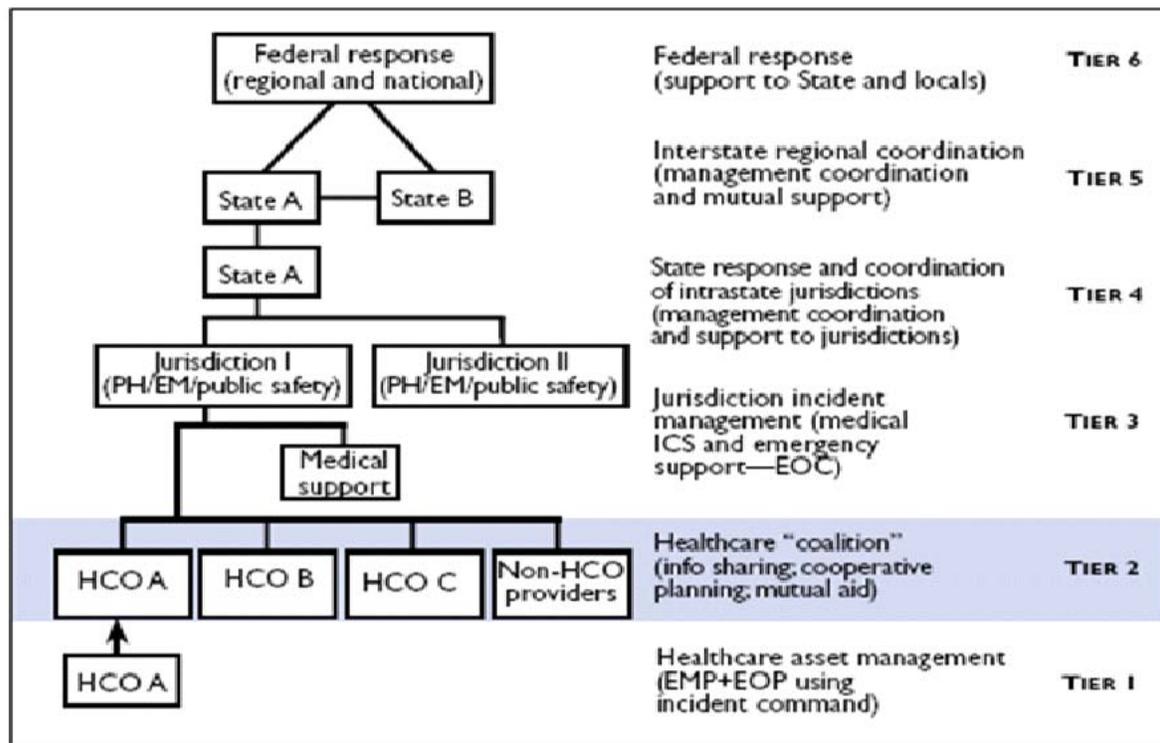


IROQUOIS
Healthcare Association

Hospital Preparedness Program

Q. What is a Healthcare Coalition?

A. A Healthcare Coalition or Partnership is a group of healthcare organizations who through cooperative planning and information sharing can provide response during an emergency. A Healthcare Coalition or Partnership (Coalition) may also include local and state agencies such as public health, emergency management and public safety. It may also include other states and the federal government. Coalitions are organized and defined in a six-tier response model illustrated below:



The fundamental Coalition is a Tier 2 Healthcare Coalition, defined as a group of individual healthcare organizations in a specified geographic area that agree to work together to maximize surge capacity and capability during medical and public health emergencies by facilitating information sharing, mutual aid, and response coordination. [1](#)

The Coalition supports the emergency response of individual healthcare organizations (Tier 1) by connecting them through an effective information processing and communications system. This facilitates the sharing of incident and emergency response information. It can also facilitate resource sharing between healthcare organizations, promote coordinated response strategies, and support effective interface between healthcare organizations and the relevant Jurisdictional Agency(s) (Tier 3). The complexity of any Coalition, and the response objectives it sets for itself, will depend in part on the level of services provided by jurisdictional authorities in its geographic area.[2](#)

Q. What is the objective of Healthcare Coalitions?

A. The primary objective of Coalitions is to optimize medical surge capacity and capability locally and regionally, as well as healthcare organization resiliency, through integrated planning and response strategy. To achieve this, hospitals will need to give added emphasis to looking outside the facility to develop closer relationships with public health, emergency management, public safety and public works and to jointly develop integrated planning and response strategies that will promote community healthcare preparedness in addition to facility preparedness.

Much of Coalition development has focused on building “preparedness organizations,” as defined by NIMS. This work is important for establishing relationships and conducting preparedness planning. However, it is only a preliminary step to operational readiness for healthcare organizations to coordinate effectively during incident response. The desired goal for Coalition development should be a “response organization” that can provide effective actions in a no-notice, sudden onset incident under the most adverse conditions.[3](#)

The specific objectives for a Coalition during emergency response and recovery may vary. It is up to the healthcare system planners to establish what the Coalition should achieve during response. Therefore, response objectives may be simple or complex depending upon the Coalition. Examples of response objectives include:

- Facilitate information sharing among participating healthcare organizations (Tier 1) and with jurisdictional authorities (Tier 3) to promote common situational awareness.
- Facilitate resource support by expediting the mutual aid process or other resource sharing arrangements among Coalition members, and supporting the request and receipt of assistance from local, State, and Federal authorities.
- Facilitate the coordination of incident response actions for the participating healthcare organizations so incident objectives, strategy, and tactics are consistent for the healthcare response. [4](#)

Q. How do Coalitions function?

A. The Healthcare Coalition's authority to operate is based on the voluntary endorsement and support of its member organizations and relevant Jurisdictional Agencies in its geographic area.⁵ Coalitions may enact Mutual Aid Plans, MOUs and contracts.⁶ They may operate with or without a Multiagency Coordinating System (MAC) According to NIMS, "the primary function of a MAC System is to coordinate activities above the field level and to prioritize the incident demands for critical or competing resources, thereby assisting the coordination of the operations in the field." A common example of a MAC System is the traditional local jurisdiction or State Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which provides high-level support to the incident command entities. While other models may be considered for the Healthcare Coalition response organization, the concepts inherent to a MAC System –specifically the EOC function and the MAC Group – are widely accepted and validated.⁷

Coalitions are at different levels of development in New York State and nationally. Some are well developed and operational, using MAC Systems; others are still defining themselves – their member organizations, objectives, scope and assumptions. Coalition development and improvement will continue as a primary HPP grant objective and hospitals should expect grant deliverables to be focused on local and regional planning needed to operationalize Coalitions.

Regional Resource Centers (RRC) had been tasked by NYSDOH to facilitate the integration of plans and activities of the hospitals into jurisdictional (Tier 3) response plans. NYSDOH is transitioning this responsibility to its Regional Offices, which will serve as the hub of Health Care Coalition development.

Q. Why the focus on Healthcare Coalitions?

A. Healthcare Coalitions were first described in the [Medical Surge Capacity and Capability: A Management System for Integrating Medical and Health Resources During large-Scale Emergencies \(MSCCHandbook\)](#) , published in August 2004 and revised in 2007. Coalition (or Partnership) development has been an HHS HPP grant capability that states must demonstrate since GY 2008-2009.

[MSCC: The Healthcare Coalition in Emergency Response and Recovery](#) was published in 2009 as a companion to the MSCC Handbook. The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance to healthcare planners on how to develop, implement, and maintain cost-effective and *response-oriented* Healthcare Coalitions. It describes the common elements of an effective Healthcare Coalition that may be applied in any locale to operationally support individual healthcare organizations and the larger community response to emergencies or disasters. The Coalition is highlighted as an emergency *response organization* in order to distinguish this handbook from other efforts that are underway across the U.S. that primarily coordinate emergency preparedness. ⁸

In 2011, HHS published [From Hospitals to Healthcare Coalitions: Transforming Health Preparedness & Response in Our Communities](#) . The report articulates the priority HHS is placing on healthcare coalitions and identifies the following strategic plans healthcare coalitions and the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP):

- Expanded development of healthcare coalitions is the next step in enhancing preparedness and response in healthcare facilities, communities and regions.
- Consistent with FEMA's "whole community" approach, coalitions must be able to serve everyone in their communities, including vulnerable or at-risk populations. HHS is promoting integration of mental and behavioral health into public health and medical preparedness activities to enhance individual and community resilience.
- Healthcare coalitions will need to engage the non-medical community in preparedness activities.
- Performance measures will be adopted to assess the level of preparedness of coalitions

In the GY 2011-2012 HPP Cooperative Agreement, HHS defines a new mission relating to healthcare coalitions. This new mission seeks to help facilities "progress from preparedness at the facility level to healthcare preparedness at the community level through further development and operation of health care coalitions." The 2012 Regional Partnership Exercises sponsored by NYSDOH are intended to test Coalitions, as were the 2010 and 2011 Regional Partnership Exercises.

HHS released *The Healthcare Preparedness Capabilities: National Guidance for Healthcare System Preparedness* which outlines the priority capabilities needed for Health Care Coalitions. For more information, Please see the IROQUOIS Brief: HHS Hospital Preparedness Capabilities at <http://www.iroquois.org/Index.aspx?ID=58>.

For additional information, please contact:

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