



Core Competencies for Disaster Information Specialists

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Objective

The objective of this project is to identify core competencies for an emerging subject specialty in medical librarianship: the disaster information specialist. The competencies will be used to stimulate discussion in the profession about a common set of knowledge and skills. Core competencies may prove useful in developing national training curricula and certification programs for librarians interested in this field.

Methods

Librarians already active in some aspect of disaster information were asked how they learned about the field, what gaps in their own knowledge they have observed, and what courses, training, on-the-job experience, conferences, etc., were useful in developing their knowledge. Previous studies on librarians' experiences in real-life disasters were reviewed to identify competencies that would have been useful in those situations. Disaster core competencies in other professional fields (nursing, public health, disaster management, etc.) were reviewed to glean ideas for librarian competencies.

Results

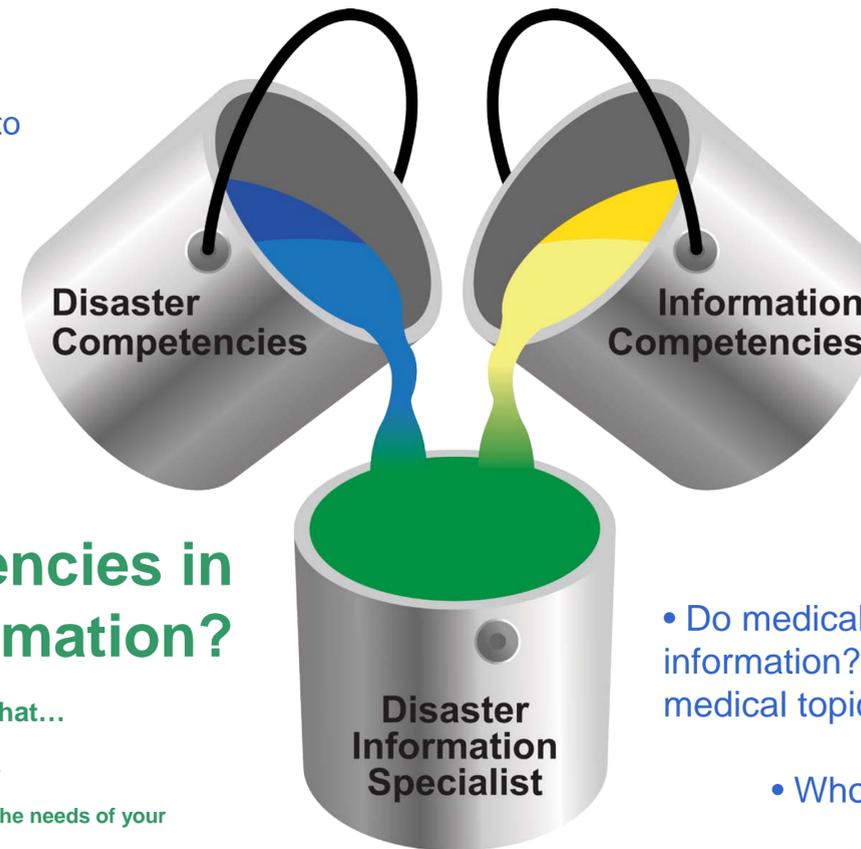
The many documented experiences of librarians acting in response to disaster situations are a rich source for identifying possible disaster roles and, more important, the skills needed to carry out those roles. Partners in the first two years of the Disaster Information Specialist Project have also identified many possible competencies and training needs. Core competencies established broadly for all librarians could be adapted as the framework for an expanded, subject-specific set of knowledge. A review of disaster core competencies developed for other professional fields yielded many that could be included or adapted for disaster information specialists, especially requirements for background knowledge and competencies describing professional behavior.

Conclusions

Core competencies must benefit workers and be developed by consensus in order to have broad, meaningful appeal. The process takes time and motivated volunteers who are willing to determine the benefits of a common body of knowledge and then review and advise on the selection of competencies. Disaster-related competencies already developed for other professions can be a starting point for this process. Agreement on core competencies is only a first step to preparing librarians for disaster information roles. They can be used as a guide to developing a common curriculum for online, classroom, or field training. Those who attain the core competencies may be interested in certification or credentialing that validates their studies and practical experience.

Ideas from disaster competencies developed for:

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|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Community volunteers | Health educators |
| Emergency managers | Veterinarians |
| Public health workers | Physicians |
| Environmental health | Students |
| Veterans Affairs staff | Dentists |
| Medical Reserve Corps | Nurses |
| Long-term care providers | |
| Culturally competent responders | |



Ideas from core competencies for librarians:

-  **Core Competencies of Librarianship**
 -  **Competencies for Lifelong Learning and Professional Success**
 -  **Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century**
- Competency Index for the Library Field (based on 12 sets)

Why core competencies in disaster information?

Core competencies can give you the confidence that...

- YOU and YOUR library can make a difference in a disaster.
- YOU have a competitive edge and the knowledge to meet the needs of your community.
- YOU can play a key role in connecting disaster personnel with resources and training.

Core competencies can provide...

- A benchmark for your current knowledge and training needs.
- Enhanced credibility with disaster personnel because you speak their language.
- A common understanding of the concept of a disaster information specialist in line with the Incident Command System.
- Assurance that librarians meet the same National Incident Management System training requirements as all disaster workers and volunteers.

Your opinion?

- Do medical librarians want training in disaster health information? After all, "disaster health" is just one of many medical topics.
 - Who should develop the core competencies?
- What organization should sponsor certification?
 - Would you obtain certification if it were offered?
- How much time could you spend to pursue certification?
 - What training costs could you afford?
- Would your employer support your interest in certification?

Are you interested in volunteering to develop competencies?