



DEVELOPING AN EQUITY APPROACH TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Liane Jollon, San Juan Basin Public Health

Emergency management practices rely on providing equal access to resources and services in order to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters and large-scale emergencies. They rely on well-functioning existing structures and relationships within a community. This approach is generally not well-positioned to address the needs of the community's most vulnerable members. Overall, the emergency management field focuses on the principles of equality rather than equity, leading to different outcomes than if the lens shifted to incorporate more equity work.

We know that more vulnerable populations fare more poorly during responses to and recovery from large-scale emergencies and disasters. Addressing this gap through better alignment of health, human services, and emergency preparedness would improve disaster outcomes for all children and families in Colorado.

The goal is to develop policies and practices for the disaster preparedness field to better address considerations for vulnerable populations. In other words, we seek to develop an equity approach within emergency management that contemplates how to meet people's needs based on their unique circumstances and actively seeks to remove complex systemic barriers that inhibit success in order to better protect communities and foster safer, more resilient communities for all.

To demonstrate the value of this approach, we applied for and received Office of Health Equity funding from the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment to pilot a rural equity in emergency preparedness project at San Juan Basin Public Health. Upon completion of the pilot project, we aim to have a toolbox for how to scale and replicate the pilot across Colorado communities. In addition to demonstrating the value of applying an equity lens to emergency management, success requires an improvement in connectedness between public health, human services, and emergency management across the cycle of preparedness: prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery to disaster.

The pilot was launched in September 2018. We will have data to assess in September 2019.



Liane Jollon
Executive Director
San Juan Basin Public Health

Liane Jollon is the executive director of San Juan Basin Public Health, which serves all residents of Archuleta and La Plata counties. Their mission is to protect human and environmental health and inspire well-being in their communities.

“Thank you for the opportunity to connect with strategic minds across disciplines to learn from each other and build relationships so we can be the change we want to experience in the world.”

The biggest lessons in this experience were found in the opportunities to draw links between work that each of us is passionate about with work that others in the fellowship are pursuing.

The opportunity to commune with thinkers and doers from aligned — yet different — disciplines is fantastic for sparking new lenses and honing budding ideas. Thank you.”