Emergency Preparedness Experience and Training Needs: Community Health Partners

May, 2016

Center for Minority Health Services
Office of Preparedness and Response

Background

Community-based organizations (CBOs) often play an important role in emergency response. However, CBOs that primarily work with limited English proficiency (LEP) populations may not have as much experience in emergency preparedness and response. To understand the experience and training needs of community health partners better, IDPH's Center for Minority Health Services and Office for Preparedness and Response worked together to develop a survey for distribution to community health partners.

Methods

A brief electronic survey was sent to community health partners who work with LEP populations. The survey link was active from December 2015 to February 2016. The survey focused on the experiences and needs of community health partners in addressing emergency preparedness with the communities they serve. Because a complete list of community health partners in Illinois was unavailable, the survey link was shared with key partners who then distributed the survey link to their partners. Due to the fact that the survey was not distributed systematically or randomly, findings must be interpreted with caution. Additionally, although local health departments were not intended recipients of the survey, several LHDs completed the survey.

Results

One hundred and one (101) responses to the survey were received; ten IP addresses had more than one survey respondent. Responses were not de-duplicated due to differing responses among individuals from the same organization. Because some survey respondents skipped questions or followed pre-programmed skip patterns, the number of respondents is indicated for each question.

The largest proportion of survey respondents were CBOs (27%) however, respondents were also from local health departments (LHDs) (23%), community health centers (15%) and a variety of other types of organizations (see Figure 1).
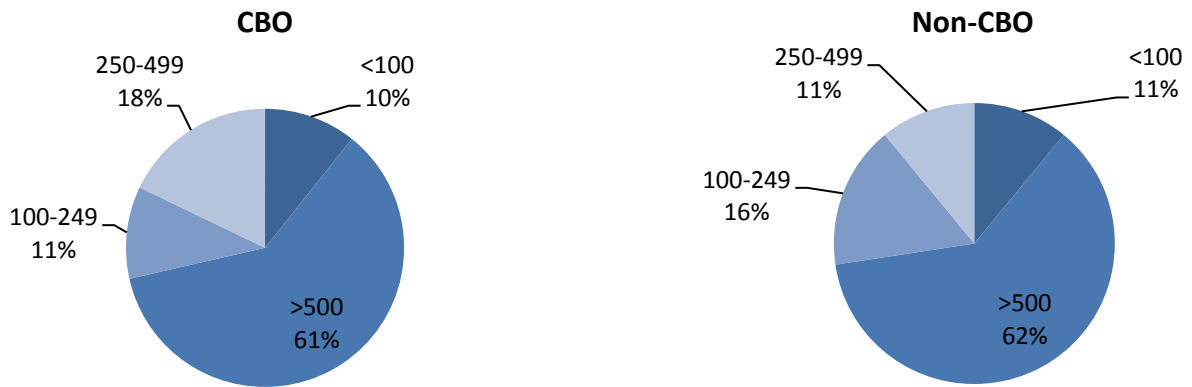
Figure 1. Survey Respondents by Organization Type (n=101)
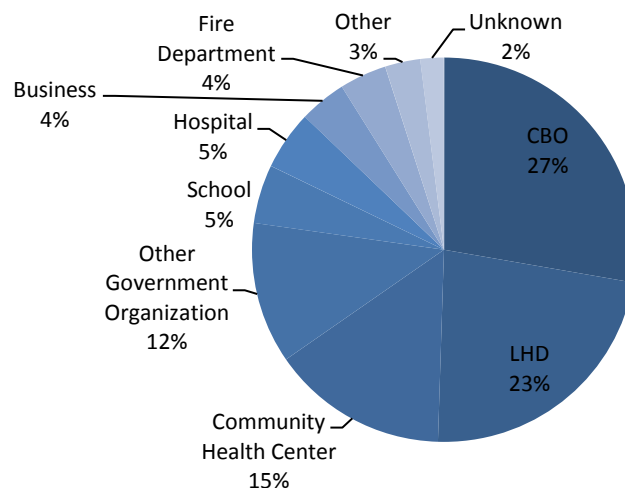
Size of Community Served by Organization Type

The majority of respondents, both CBOs and non-CBOs, reported having >500 clients annually. However, organizations serving fewer clients were also well-represented in the survey.

Figure 2. Annual Number of Community Members Reached by Organization Type (n=101)

CBO

- 250-499: 18%
- <100: 10%
- 100-249: 11%
- >500: 61%

Non-CBO

- 250-499: 11%
- <100: 11%
- 100-249: 16%
- >500: 62%

Counties where Community Members Served by Respondent Organizations Reside

Survey respondents serving community members in every county in Illinois responded to the survey. The largest number of survey respondents served clients residing in Cook County.

Figure 3. Number of Respondent Organizations Serving Clients by County (n=101)

Legend:
- 5 - 7
- 8 - 13
- 14 - 20
- 21 - 35
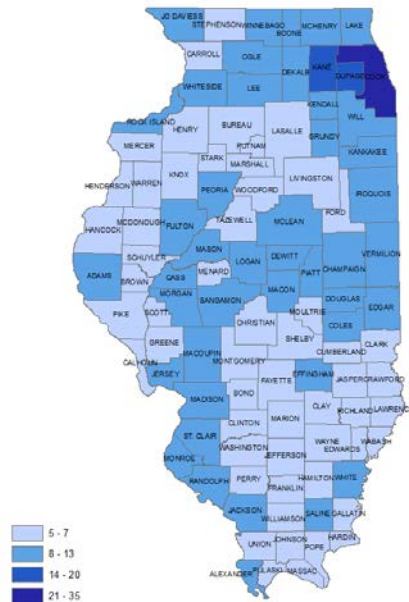
Languages Spoken by Community Members

A wide variety of languages are spoken by the communities respondent organizations serve. Spanish was most often reported (70%) followed by American Sign Language, and then Arabic. A large number of organizations that work with the deaf population responded to the survey. In 2012, about 1.6% of Illinois adults aged 18-64 years were estimated to be hard of hearing (http://libguides.gallaudet.edu/content.php?pid=119476&sid=1029190). Six percent of respondents were not sure if languages other than English were spoken by their community members.

**Table 1.** Most Common Non-English Languages Spoken by Community Members Served by Survey Respondents* (n=101)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Spanish	69.3%	70
American Sign Language	16.8%	17
Arabic	16.8%	17
Chinese	13.9%	14
Korean	12.9%	13
Polish	11.9%	12
French	10.9%	11
Burmese Dialects	7.9%	8
Gujarti	5.9%	6
Not Sure	5.9%	6
German	4.0%	4
Russian	4.0%	4
Serbo-Croatian	4.0%	4
Urdu	4.0%	4
Nepali	3.0%	3
Cambodian/Khmer	2.0%	2
Farsi	2.0%	2
Hindi	2.0%	2
Italian	2.0%	2
Swahili	2.0%	2
Tagalog	2.0%	2

* Some languages were only reported by one survey respondent and are not included in the table

Ability to Translate Materials into Languages Spoken by Community Members?

Community health partners were asked about their ability to translate materials into the languages of the community members they serve. Most organizations indicated that they were able to translate materials with CBOs slightly more likely to indicate that they had this capability as compared to non-CBOs (75% compared to 68%).

Figure 4. Ability to Translate Materials in Non-English Languages by Organization Type (n=101)

CBO

No
21%

Not sure
4%

Yes
75%

Non-CBO

No
18%

Not sure
14%

Yes
68%
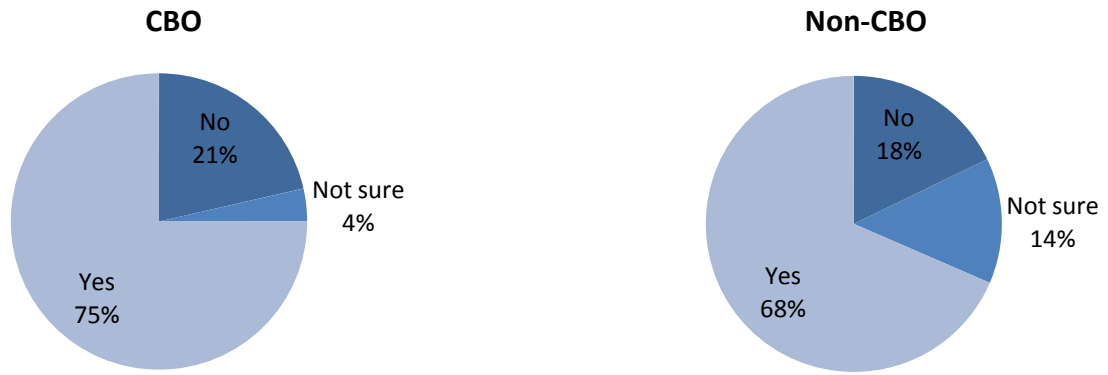
Awareness of Emergency Plans for Your Community?

Non-CBOs were more likely to report awareness of community emergency plans compared to CBOs (69% compared to 50%). Because many hospitals and LHDs completed the survey, this finding likely reflects the roles of the different organization types. Interestingly, 25% of CBO and 14% of non-CBO respondents were not sure if they were aware of their community's emergency plans - indicating an opportunity to work with both types of organizations on improving awareness of community emergency plans.

Figure 5. Awareness of Community Emergency Plan by Community Organization Type (n=101)

CBO

No
25%

Yes
50%

Not sure
25%

Non-CBO

No
17%

Not sure
14%

Yes
69%
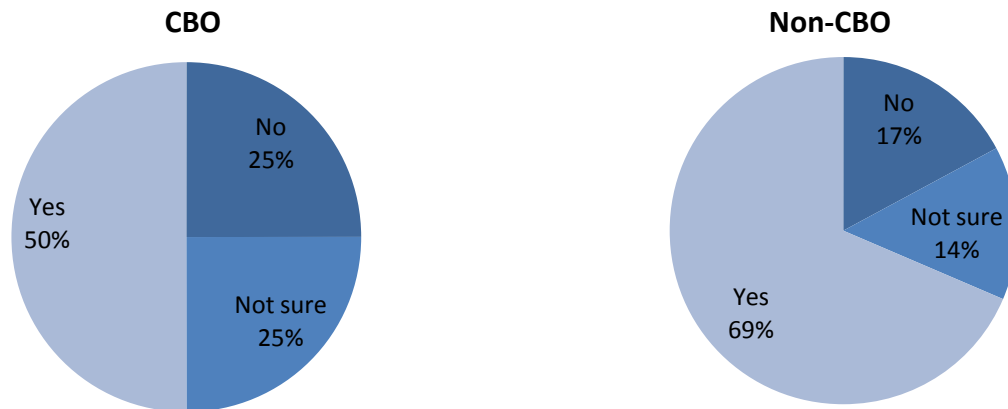
Provided Emergency Preparedness Information to Communities Served Prior to an Emergency?

Prior to an event, CBOs were more likely to report having provided information to the populations they serve compared to non-CBOs (54% compared to 46%). A relatively high proportion of respondents were not sure of their organization's role in providing emergency preparedness messaging (20%).

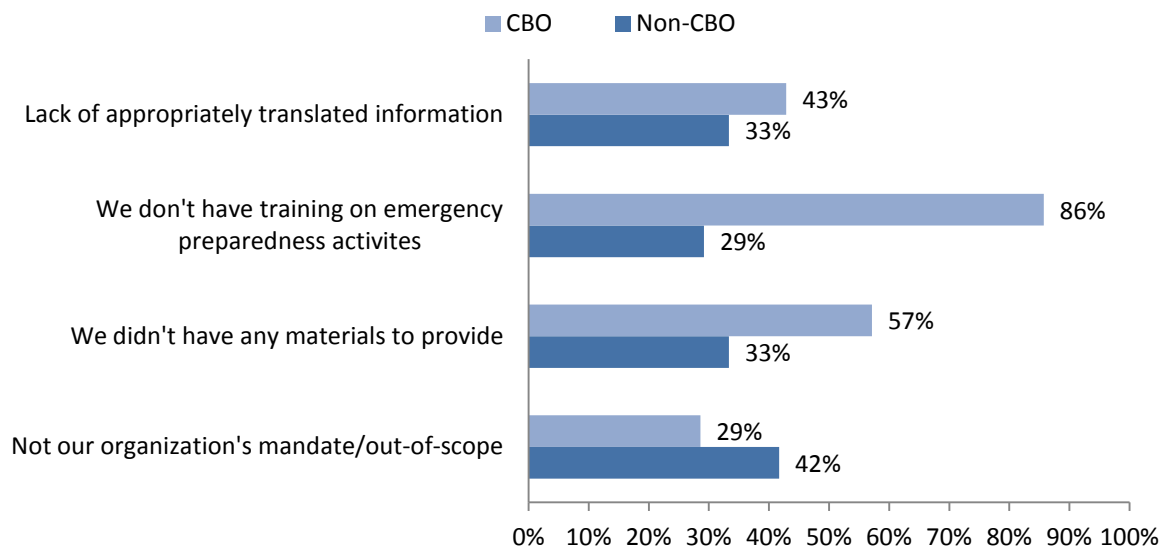**Figure 6.** Provided Information to Community Members Prior to an Emergency by Organization Type (n=98)

CBO

No 25%

Not sure 21%

Yes 54%

Non-CBO

No 36%

Not sure 18%

Yes 46%
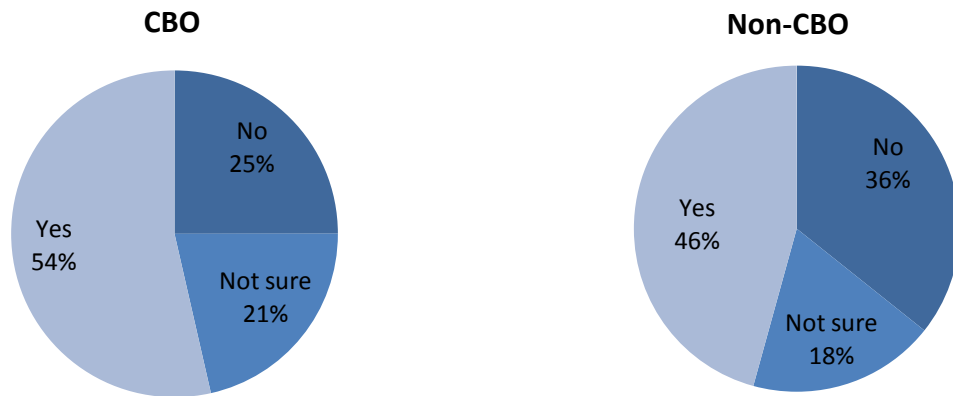
Reasons Organization has not Provided Emergency Preparedness Information (Prior to an Emergency)?

The majority of CBOs (71%) viewed providing emergency preparedness information as within their organization's mandate. Among CBOs, the primary reason cited for not providing emergency preparedness information to community members was lack of training on emergency preparedness activities. CBOs also mentioned that they didn't have materials on these topics (57%).

A higher proportion of non-CBOs reported providing emergency preparedness information as being out-of-scope of their organization's mandate (42%). Lack of training and materials were less often cited by non-CBOs as barriers to providing information on emergency preparedness.

Figure 7. Reasons for not Providing Emergency Preparedness Information by Organization Type (n=31)

CBO   Non-CBO

Lack of appropriately translated information
- CBO: 43%
- Non-CBO: 33%

We don't have training on emergency preparedness activites
- CBO: 86%
- Non-CBO: 29%

We didn't have any materials to provide
- CBO: 57%
- Non-CBO: 33%

Not our organization's mandate/out-of-scope
- CBO: 29%
- Non-CBO: 42%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Emergency Preparedness Topics Covered by Organizations with Community Members Prior to an Emergency?

Survey respondents were asked about specific topics related to emergency preparedness on which they've provided information to community members prior to an emergency. CBOs reported higher rates of providing education around extreme weather and household emergency preparedness while non-CBOs reported higher rates of providing education around influenza and tornadoes. Additional topics cited by respondents on which they've provided information included: bomb threats, floods, fire, collisions, nuclear plant disaster preparedness, and active shooter on campus.
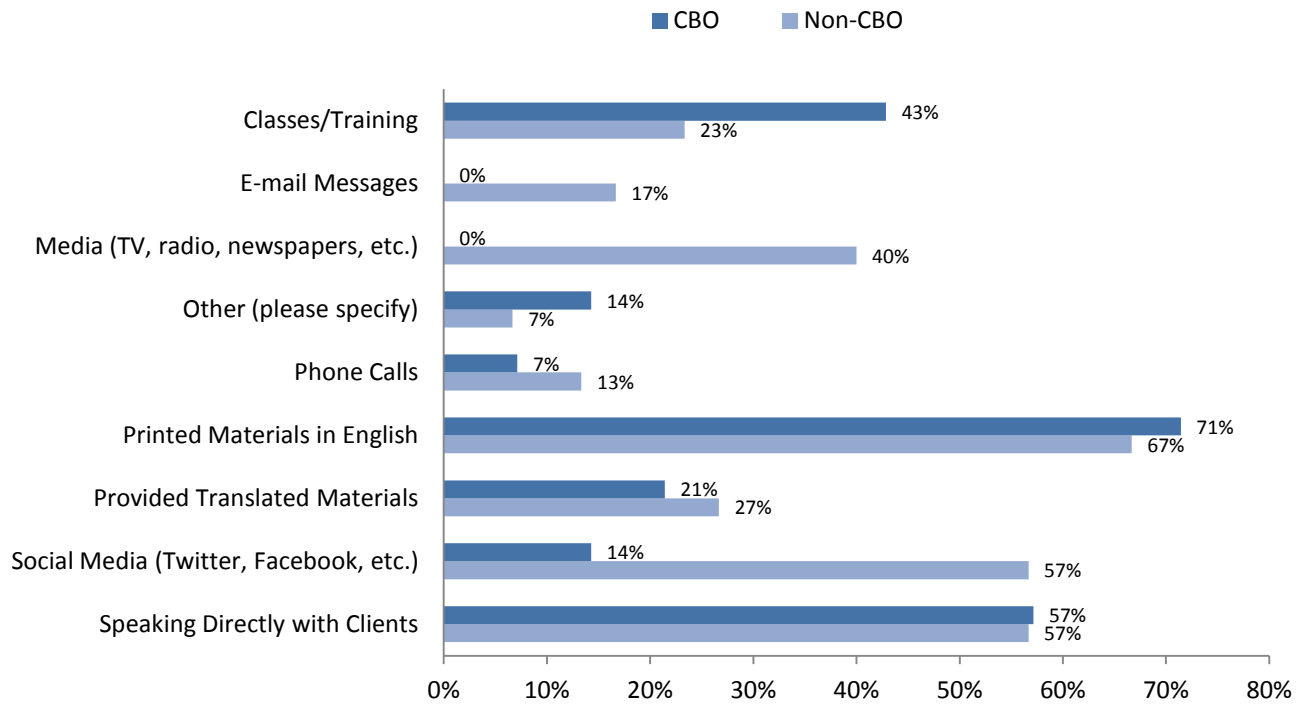
Figure 8. Emergency Preparedness Topics Covered Prior to an Emergency by Organization Type (n=44)
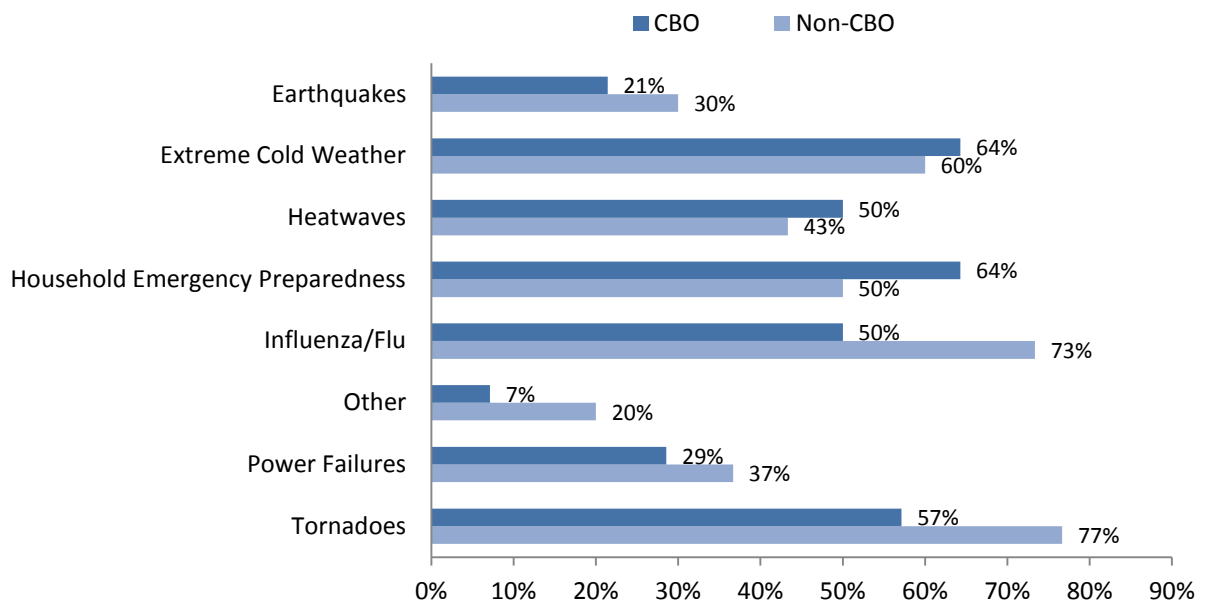
Format Used to Share Emergency Preparedness Information Prior to an Emergency

The most commonly reported method to share information about emergency preparedness with community members by both CBOs and non-CBOs was distribution of printed materials in English. The next most commonly reported information sharing methods were social media and speaking directly with clients. Use of social media was common among non-CBOs but was not reported by any CBOs. E-mail messages were not utilized by respondent CBOs.

7

Figure 9. Methods Used to Share Emergency Preparedness Information Prior to an Emergency (n=44)

Legend: ■ CBO   ■ Non-CBO

Method	CBO	Non-CBO
Classes/Training	43%	23%
E-mail Messages	0%	17%
Media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.)	0%	40%
Other (please specify)	14%	7%
Phone Calls	7%	13%
Printed Materials in English	71%	67%
Provided Translated Materials	21%	27%
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)	14%	57%
Speaking Directly with Clients	57%	57%

Ever Provided Emergency Messages to Your Community during an Emergency?

About one third of CBO and non-CBO respondents reported providing emergency messages in an emergency situation to community members. A higher proportion of non-CBOs (38%) reported providing messaging during past emergencies as compared to CBOs.

Figure 10. History of Providing Emergency Messages to Community Members during an Emergency by Organization Type (n=93)

CBO

Response	Percent
Yes	30%
No	55%
Not sure	15%

Non-CBO

Response	Percent
Yes	38%
No	50%
Not sure	12%

8
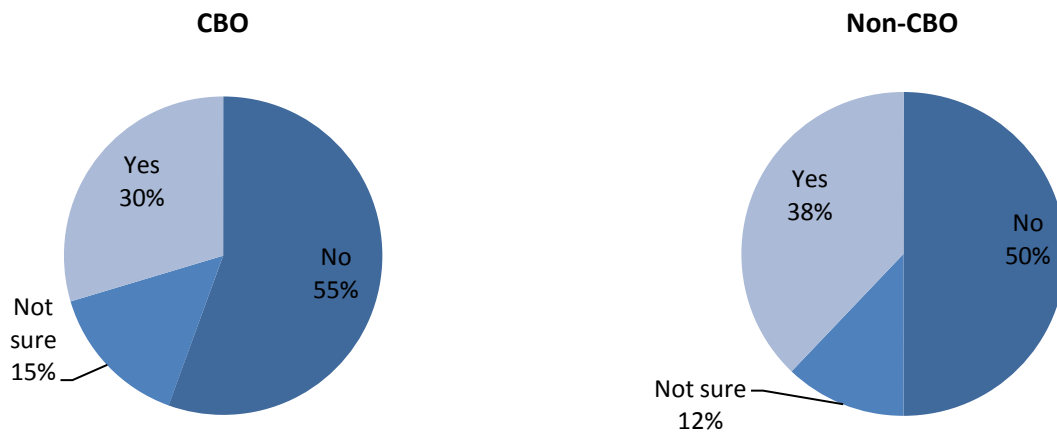
Types of Emergencies where Information was Provided

Among survey respondents who indicated that they had provided information to community members in past emergencies, the most commonly reported topic was around influenza. Non-CBOs also indicated having provided information around extreme cold weather and tornadoes. Providing information during past floods was also mentioned by 5% of non-CBOs. Among CBOs, a low percentage reported providing information during past emergencies with the highest proportion providing information about influenza and general household preparedness.

Figure 11. Emergencies where Provided Messaging to Community Members by Organization Type (n=29)
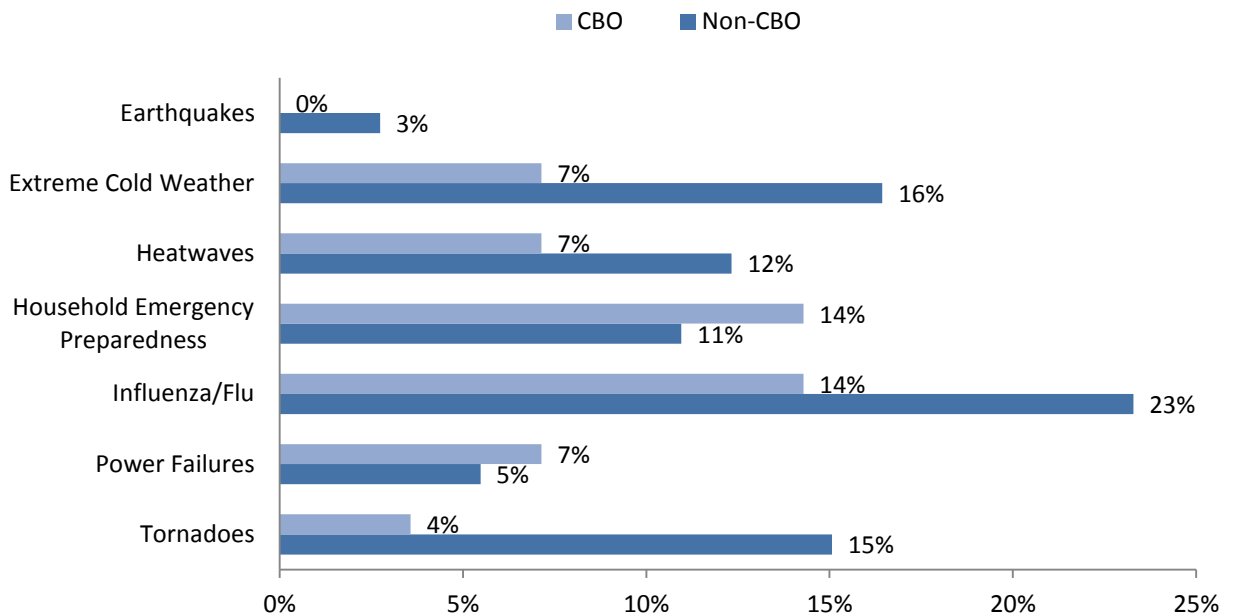
Interest in Receiving Technical Assistance or Tools to Improve Communication about Emergency Preparedness with LEP Community Members?

There was a strong interest by both CBOs and non-CBOs in receiving additional information regarding communication with LEP community members about emergency preparedness. However, CBOs were much more interested than non-CBOs in receiving additional technical assistance (84% compared to 61%). Because many of the non-CBOs already do work around emergency preparedness, particularly local health departments, these types of organizations may perceive having sufficient training to conduct communication around emergency preparedness.
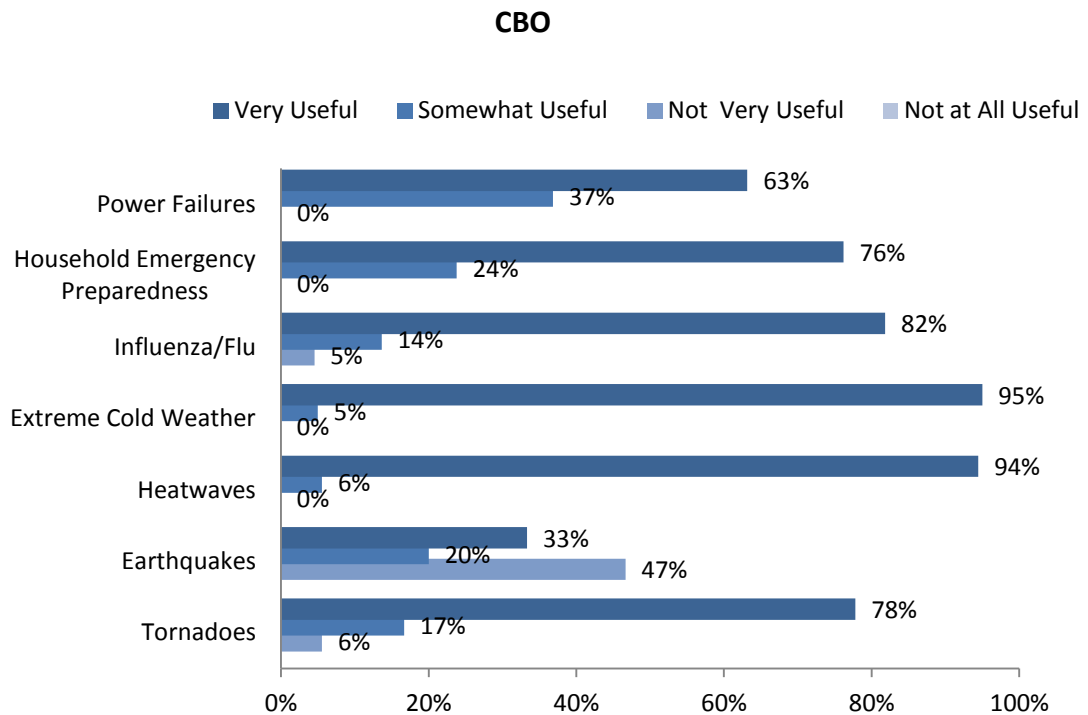
Figure 12. Interest in Receiving Additional Technical Resources to Improve Communication with LEP Community Members around Emergency Preparedness (n=86)
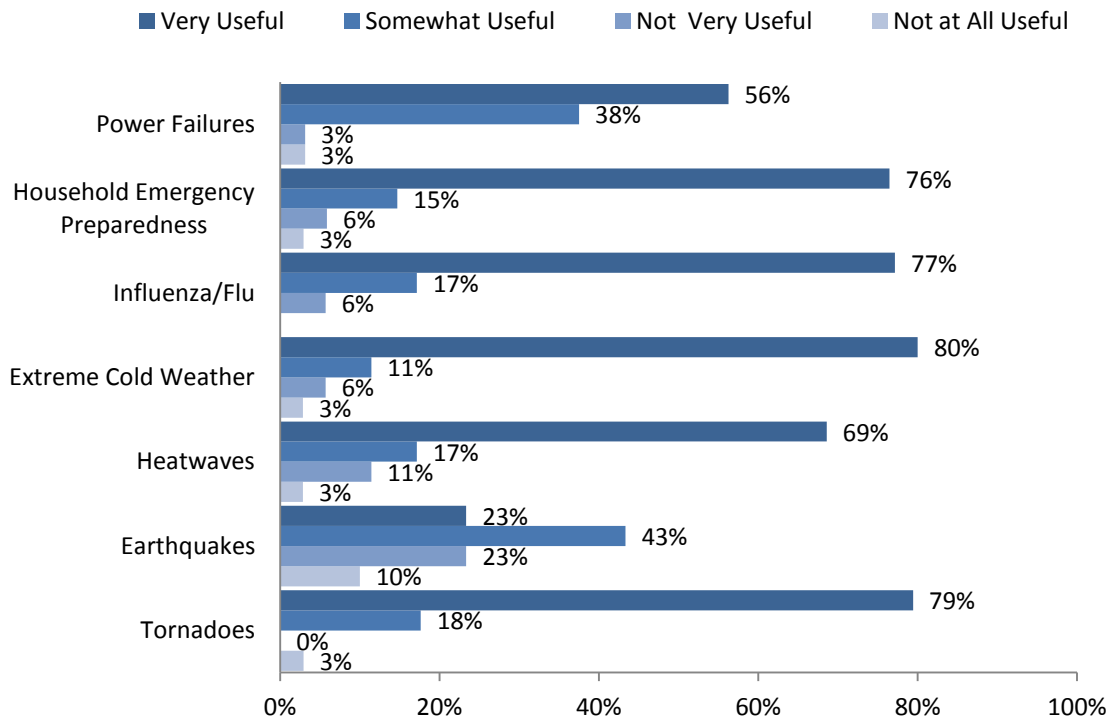
CBO

Non-CBO

Emergency Preparedness Topics Most Useful for Populations Served

CBOs identified that information about extreme hot and cold weather would be most useful to the populations they serve, followed by information about influenza. Non-CBOs ranked information about tornados and influenza, in addition to extreme cold weather, as being most useful. Both types of organizations ranked information about earthquakes as being least useful

Figure 13. Most Useful Emergency Preparedness Topics by Organization Type (n=60)

CBO

■ Very Useful   ■ Somewhat Useful   ■ Not Very Useful   ■ Not at All Useful

Power Failures: 63%, 37%, 0%
Household Emergency Preparedness: 76%, 24%, 0%
Influenza/Flu: 82%, 14%, 5%
Extreme Cold Weather: 95%, 5%, 0%
Heatwaves: 94%, 6%, 0%
Earthquakes: 33%, 20%, 47%
Tornadoes: 78%, 17%, 6%

Non-CBO

Legend: Very Useful, Somewhat Useful, Not Very Useful, Not at All Useful

Power Failures: 56%, 38%, 3%, 3%
Household Emergency Preparedness: 76%, 15%, 6%, 3%
Influenza/Flu: 77%, 17%, 6%
Extreme Cold Weather: 80%, 11%, 6%, 3%
Heatwaves: 69%, 17%, 11%, 3%
Earthquakes: 23%, 43%, 23%, 10%
Tornadoes: 79%, 18%, 0%, 3%

Other topics mentioned by survey respondents that would be useful so share with the communities they serve include: fires, floods, infectious other infectious disease including TB, and dealing with riots.

Additional Comments about Emergency Preparedness Shared by Survey Respondents

- We work with refugees and often emergency preparedness is a very low priority until an actual emergency occurs. It would be beneficial to get assistance on ways to help people understand their risk so they are open to preparing for an emergency.
- A video featuring a person using sign language along with captions on video will be very helpful for deaf community members.
- Closed caption on television, tweets, Facebook, 911 system, texts to be sent to deaf populations would be helpful.
- Having the trust of the community or being affiliated with a trusted source in the community is absolutely vital to educate and provide assistance effectively.

Summary

CBOs in Illinois that work with LEP populations indicated interest in providing emergency preparedness messages to the communities they serve. The main reason cited by CBOs for not providing information on emergency preparedness was lack of training. However, a high proportion of respondent community-

based organizations were interested in receiving technical assistance on a variety of emergency preparedness topics.

The low rate of messaging from CBOs to community members during past emergencies indicates an opportunity for working with CBOs to improve messaging with LEP communities during future emergencies.