

Breakout Session B: *Learning to Build Resilience at the Neighborhood Level*

Presenters:

Moderator - Kenneth W. Schor DO, MPH, Acting Director, NCDMPH

Daniel Homsey, Director of Neighborhood Resilience, City Administrator's Office of the City & County of San Francisco

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Session summarized and reported by:

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Overall Key Session Points:

1. Building social capital in local communities may better prepare them for disaster recovery.
2. Neighborhoods can build social capital by forming neighborhood empowerment groups, for example, the Neighborhood Empowerment Network in San Francisco—these leverage leadership inherent in the neighborhood and increase social capital through relationship building.
3. Building social capital can be made accessible and fun by including diverse groups of people and encouraging participation in a variety of projects, including a tabletop exercise demonstrated during the session.

Session Summary:

The *Learning to Build Health Resilience at the Neighborhood Level* session introduced attendees to the importance of building community-level relationships as a mechanism to increase resilience. The breakout session consisted of an interactive group activity preceded by two brief presentations describing: (1) the evidence base for building social capital in local communities as a means to increase disaster preparedness, and (2) a real-world example of building social capital through a collaboration of city agencies, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, and local community stakeholders.

The first panelist discussed the evidence base for building social capital in local communities to better prepare them for disaster recovery. He showed that recovery is not simply a function of damage, economic impact, governance, population density, or social inequality, but also of the extent of social capital evident in the community before, during, and after the event. Concepts such as “bonding social capital,” “bridging social capital,” “linking social capital,” “collective action,” and “voice” were introduced.

The second panelist moved from the evidence base to an example of building social capital that is currently in practice, the Neighborhood Empowerment Network. He discussed the importance of making resilience approachable to citizens by building upon the examples of leadership and community action that are already inherent within communities, including Parent Teacher Associations, the Boy and Girl Scouts, faith-based initiatives, and community watch groups.

The session closed with a group activity bringing together concepts of social capital, sustainable practices, and resilience building. Participants were given a neighborhood map and asked to make improvements to the infrastructure, landscape, planning systems, and layout to maximize resilience and disaster preparedness. Participants were very engaged in the planning of their neighborhood and in brainstorming sustainable solutions to anticipated problems.

At the end of the session, each small group shared their ideas for community sustainability and resilience with the rest of the group. Focal points included strengthening access to and supply of essential resources (food, water, and energy), protecting essential services (health care, transportation, banking, major industry), and developing and re-developing land to mitigate the potential outcomes of disaster. Many participants indicated the desire to bring the ideas about community sustainability and resilience back to their organizations and were encouraged by session leaders to use the resources available on the workshop Web site to replicate the activity.

Supplementary material

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2014.144>