



Meeting the Needs of Our Community in an Emergency

The Value of a Strong CHC-Public Health Relationship

Introduction

The interprofessional collaboration between Community Health Centers (CHCs) and Public Health agencies plays a critical role in healthcare system preparedness, response, and recovery. This presentation showcases how the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (MLCHC) and the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) partner to meet the public health needs of Boston residents before, during and after emergencies.

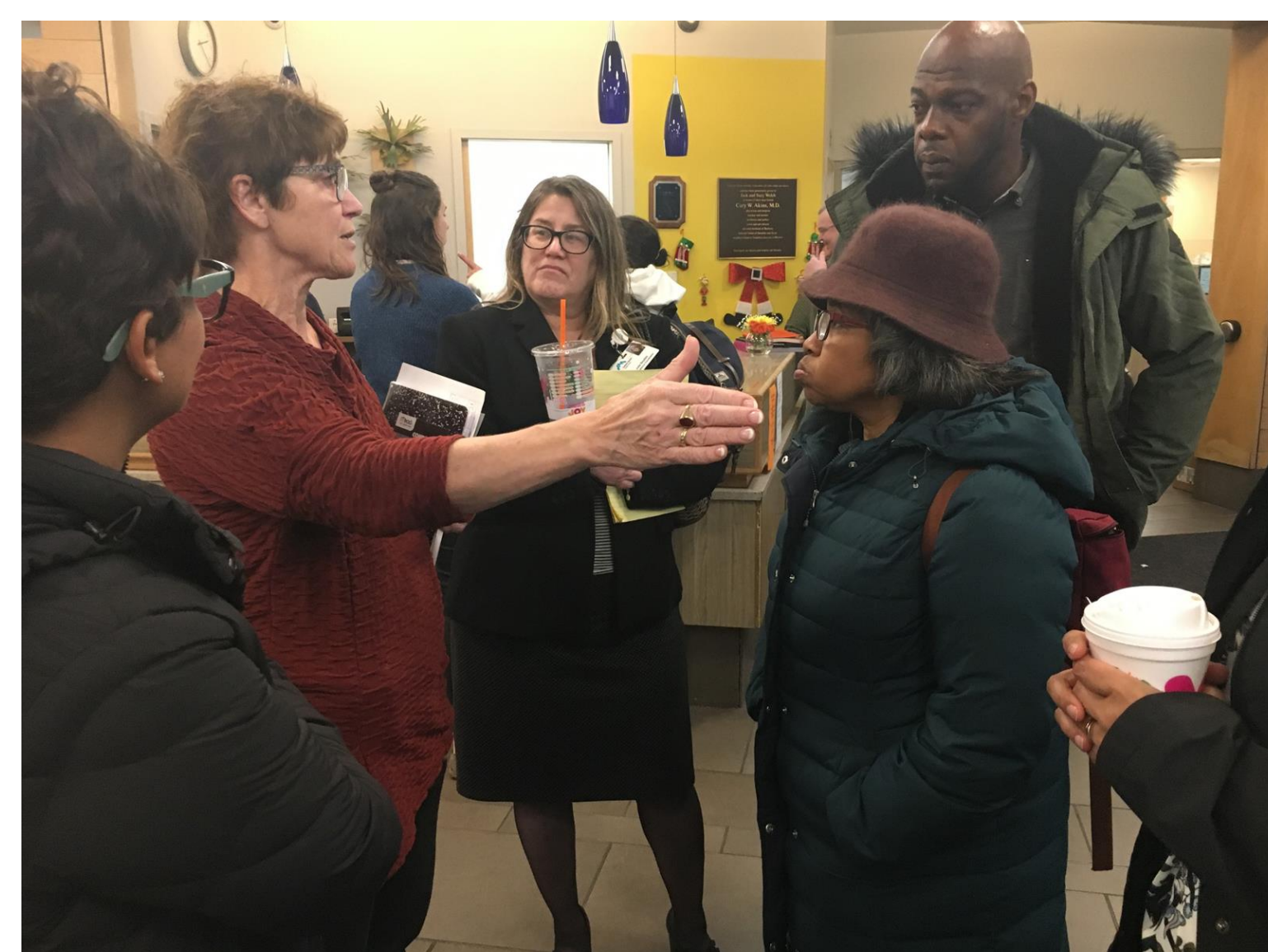
Preparedness

The Boston Community Health Center Emergency Preparedness (EP) Committee, a sub-group of the Boston Healthcare Preparedness Coalition (HPC), develops and promotes the emergency preparedness capabilities of CHCs within the Metro Boston Homeland Security Region (MBHSR).



Scan the code to learn more about the **Boston HPC**

- The Boston CHC EP Committee convenes emergency management staff from across the region to share lessons-learned, discuss best practices and strategize for emerging issues and future projects.
- The Boston HPC Training and Exercise Working Group developed an Exercise Design Toolkit, a set of planning tools and customizable templates, to assist CHCs to design, conduct, and evaluate their HSEEP-compliant exercises and meet regulatory requirements.
- Since 2012, BPHC and MLCHC have conducted emergency management drills with Boston CHCs to practice emergency communications using 800 MHz radios and other response tools used in emergencies.

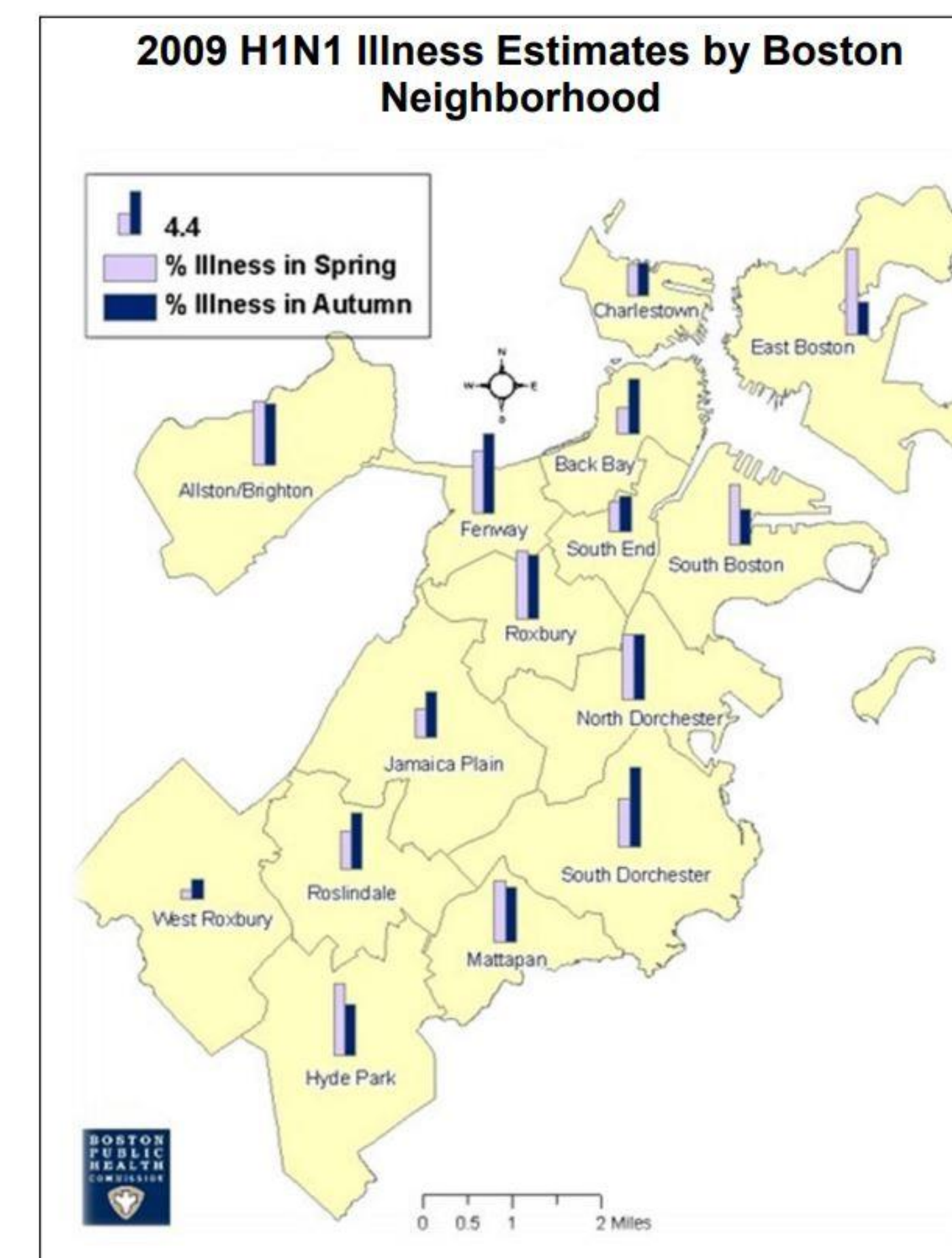
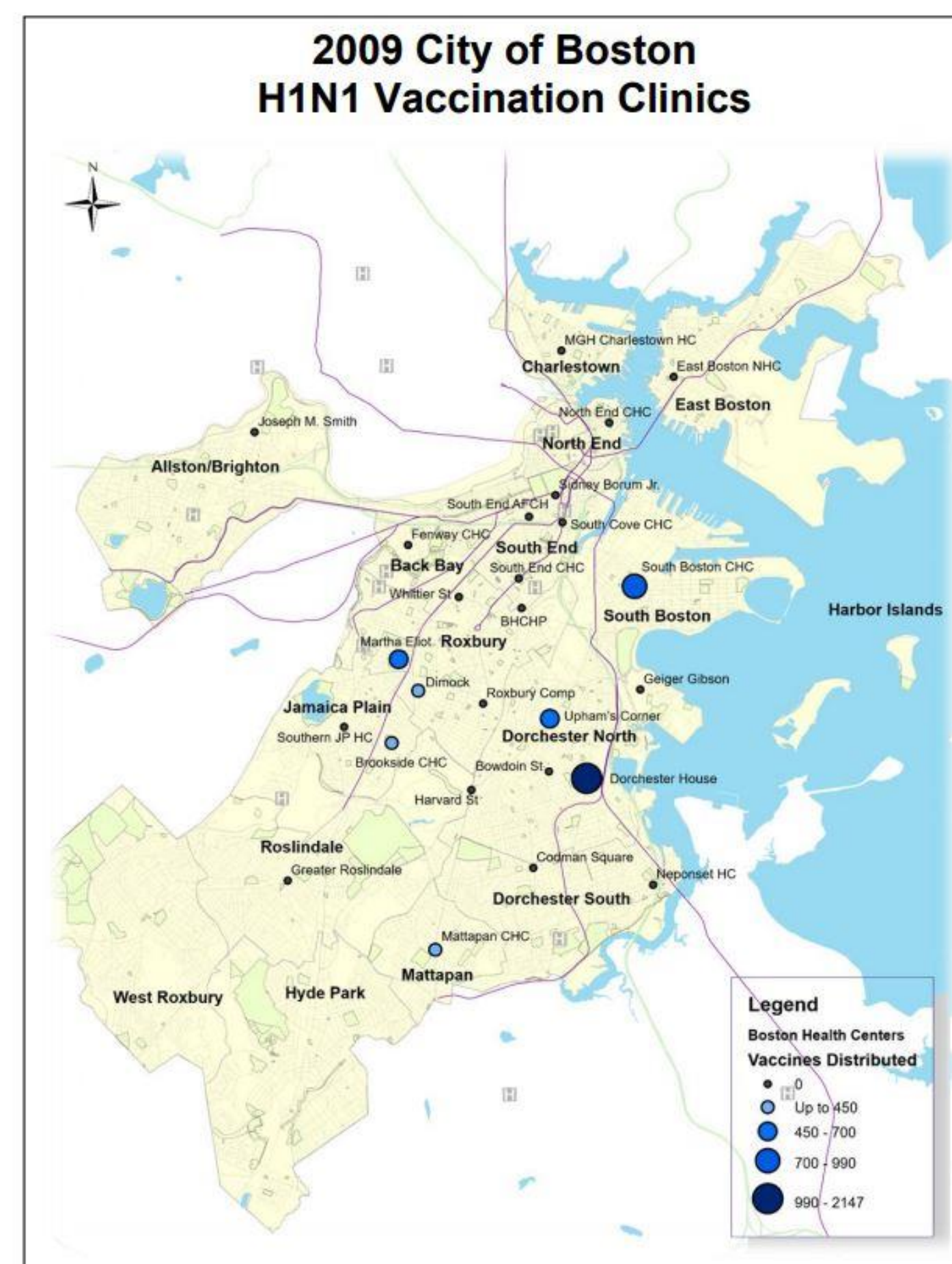


◀ **Pictured:** Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program walks through their response operations at the January 2019 CHC EP Meeting.

Response

2009 H1N1 Pandemic Response

Between April-June 2009, Emergency Department Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) peaked at 7.1%, causing a strain on Boston's healthcare system. As part of the overall response, BPHC partnered with CHCs to set up immunization clinics in their facilities for five weeks. BPHC supported CHCs with Boston Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers and provided funding for CHC staff overtime and material resources.



This partnership resulted in the vaccination of over 20,000 Boston residents (approximately 3.4% of the total population) by November 2009. The number of H1N1 cases in neighborhoods with high levels of pediatric hospitalizations (East Boston, Dorchester, Roxbury, and South Boston) was lowered.

◀ **Pictured:** Upham's Corner Health Center in Boston vaccinated 750 people at an H1N1 clinic in November 2009.

2018-2019 Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) Outbreak Response

In September 2018, Massachusetts announced an outbreak of acute HAV in individuals experiencing homelessness and persons who inject drugs. 45% of the cases statewide were located in Boston.

BPHC collaborated with CHCs to increase HAV vaccinations and provided guidance on appropriate sanitation in shelters. BPHC and CHCs also conducted outreach to the most at-risk populations through street teams and mobile units.

Recovery

During the **2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season**, MLCHC and BPHC coordinated a joint recovery effort to support the needs of evacuees seeking shelter and services in Boston.

- Boston CHCs reported estimated numbers of evacuees to BPHC and other public health and healthcare partners to plan for impacts on the City of Boston.
- Boston CHCs provided bilingual services, medical interpretation, and tele-interpretation services to evacuees and their families. BPHC helped to navigate evacuees to housing, healthcare insurance enrollment, and medical services including medication and durable medical equipment.
- BPHC Bureau of Recovery Services presented *HelpSteps*, a free web-based system that connects individuals to local health and human services, to health centers.



Learn more about **HelpSteps**

The January 12, **2010 Earthquake in Haiti** affected several CHCs whose staff and patients make up a large portion of the Haitian population in Boston. In 15 days after the earthquake, CHCs began seeing survivors who self-evacuated.

- BPHC, MLCHC, and other public health agencies worked together to provide post-disaster mental health and trauma recovery services to the Haitian community through a SAMHSA Emergency Response Grant (Haiti SERG)
- 6 Boston CHCs, out of 9 Massachusetts CHCs, mobilized to meet health needs of evacuees.
- BPHC and MLCHC designed a survey to gauge the capacity to conduct medical clinics for refugees at Boston Health Centers.



Learn more about **MLCHC**

▶ **Pictured:** Whittier Street Health Center holds Art Therapy Group Counseling for those affected by the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti.

