

Music (00:00):

Ketsa. "Mission Ready." Raising Frequency, <https://freemusicarchive.org/static>.

Trudy (00:09):

Welcome to Hotwash. I'm Trudy.

Christine (00:11):

And I'm Christine. We're emergency management and public health professionals.

Trudy (00:16):

Nerds, talking about law and policy of emergencies.

Christine (00:21):

Today on episode four, a pot wash, we're switching it up a bit for a game show edition where Megan Timmins, CHHS associate director helps us learn emergency management and public health preparedness terms.

Music (00:34):

Ketsa. "Mission Ready." Raising Frequency, <https://freemusicarchive.org/static>.

Christine (00:43):

Welcome back everybody. One of the many interesting side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is seeing a lot of discussion around topics that those in the emergency management and public health emergency preparedness fields talk about a lot. But usually we draw blank stares from others or family members when we get into discussion and use some of these terms.

Trudy (01:03):

Absolutely.

Christine (01:04):

So we're hearing terms like medical surge, continuity of operations, mitigation and recovery.

Trudy (01:11):

And we love those terms. Yes, but we're not used to hearing them in the news.

Christine (01:16):

No, at least not in this context. Mitigation and recovery of course have a lot of different meanings in a lot of different fields, but they mean a specific thing in emergency management. So today we are bringing in our associate director Megan Timmins.

Trudy (01:32):

So, the backstory on this is one day I was talking to Megan and we were kind of, you know, in our field, a lot of people in our families still don't understand what we do even though a lot of us have been doing this for almost a decade and a lot of us have just kind of quit trying to explain it. But one day I was

talking to Megan with a couple of other people and she was telling me how she explained a resource management plan to her ten-year-old and I said, you, you try to do that. And then she was telling me how she explained it and over the years we found out that Megan actually does a really amazing job of explaining what we do to her kids. Christine and I had this idea that we should have Megan on to help us talk about these terms and we could do Hotwash: the game show edition.

Christine ([02:22](#)):

Dun dun, dun. Oh, that sounded suspenseful. What's a game show jingle?

Trudy ([02:28](#)):

Well we don't have the jingle yet, but we do have Megan.

Christine ([02:32](#)):

That's all we need.

Trudy ([02:33](#)):

Exactly. So Megan, before we get into the game show edition, which we know we've actually done such a good job of creating suspense. I think we've made Megan nervous, but do you mind telling us briefly, we always ask people, how did you get into this field?

Megan ([02:49](#)):

Yeah, sure. I am nervous now about this game show actually.

Christine ([02:52](#)):

Well Megan, just to put you at ease, this is like that TV show back in the day where the points don't matter. In fact, there are no points, no one's keeping track.

Megan ([03:00](#)):

Well you know, I only like playing games that you can win at. So I'm not sure that that's helpful to me. Oh, okay.

Trudy ([03:08](#)):

Well then game.

Megan ([03:10](#)):

But I think you were asking a little bit about my background and kind of how I got involved in the first place. I, you know, went through college and didn't really know what I wanted to do except for continue going to school. So that meant law school. And as I was finishing up law school, I was sort of realizing that my interests had shifted from traditional litigation to policy work. And that is such a broad term. It's not really very helpful when you're looking for a job or planning a career in any sense of the word. So I sort of fell into it probably like, I'm going to guess 50% of our staff and people in this field, the director of CHHS, Michael Greenberger, happened to be my first year contracts professor. And when I ran into him somewhere in the law school in that third year, he said, you should come work for my center and you know, figure out what you want to do after that. And that was in 2007 it's 2020.

Christine ([04:12](#)):

So there was no after that.

Megan ([04:14](#)):

Right. Well, TBD. I'm not sure that I'll die in office here, but there's a chance. So I kind of fell into it that way. But I think that the time that I've spent here sort of speaks for itself, which is, you know, I've really fallen in love with not only the substance but a lot of the people that we work with and what we're all aiming to accomplish through this work is really rewarding. So I've stayed on and continue to plan to stay here.

Trudy ([04:41](#)):

Awesome.

Christine ([04:42](#)):

Okay. So the ground rules of this game and game is very loosely defined here, we're going to throw some emergency management and public health emergency preparedness terms that Megan from a list of common terms that we use every day, Megan will have about a minute - Trudy has a handy-dandy timer. To provide an explanation that it ten-year-old will understand. So Trudy and I are going to channel our 10 year old selves.

Trudy ([05:13](#)):

Shouldn't be too hard for me, for me.

Christine ([05:20](#)):

So let's start with something really high up and overarching. That we've used in conversation I think in every podcast that maybe we should have defined us the very first episode. Okay. Megan, what is emergency management emergency?

Megan ([05:39](#)):

Emergency management is how we deal with things when they don't go as planned. Sort of the system for how we deal with things. So what I would tell my kids probably is, you know, like let's say you get sick at school, something's not going as planned. What is the system for how we manage that emergency? You know, you would your hand as the teacher to go to the school nurse, the school nurse would call your parents. You know, your parents would try and have a fight as to who was going to have to leave work to come pick you up, maybe make a doctor's appointment. So all of those pieces in that chain for, you know, how is communication happening? Who's calling whom, who's making decisions? That's all under the umbrella of emergency management or so in this case, for the more adult world, imagine like a city or a town gets sick with coven 19 and you have to start thinking through who's calling, whom. You know, who's the school nurse? Who's the parents, who's the doctors, the nurses, and the situation. Who's making decisions? How do they communicate? How are we helping? One another. How are we sharing resources? All of that together. That full system of managing the sickness and managing the emergency is emergency management.

Trudy ([06:56](#)):

Nice.

Megan ([06:56](#)):

Was that under a minute?

Trudy ([06:58](#)):

Well you ran over a little bit.

Megan ([07:01](#)):

I wasn't sure cause we didn't, we didn't define whether I was supposed to cut off at a minute or not.

Christine ([07:08](#)):

Oh, you didn't play any sort of music?

Trudy ([07:10](#)):

I had a little bit. I think it maybe wasn't aggressive enough on my timer.

Christine ([07:13](#)):

So a related term is emergency preparedness. What's the difference?

Megan ([07:21](#)):

That's a good question. What's the difference?

Christine ([07:23](#)):

Are you asking me?

Megan ([07:24](#)):

I'm going to start thinking through what the differences are.

Trudy ([07:27](#)):

There are no lifelines.

Megan ([07:29](#)):

Actually you think emergency preparedness is probably really easy for kids to understand because if you've ever traveled anywhere with a kid, including for example to the grocery store, especially very small children, they are always planning for an emergency. It might not, it might not be the emergency you think qualifies as an emergency, but they will have five snacks, 10 stuffed animals, a blankie, my very first aid supplies regardless of any type of actual injury. You know, they're always preparing. And as parents I think sort of train them to do that. So I would say emergency preparedness is just planning and preparing for anything that might happen in the future. And I think that's an easy one for kids to inherently understand. You know, if they're going to sleep over at a friend's house, you know, they've got their bag of emergency supplies.

Christine ([08:21](#)):

That makes sense. So emergency preparedness is something that the public does everyday people do?

Megan (08:27):

Yes.

Christine (08:27):

Okay, cool. And you were under time there.

Megan (08:30):

I was living in fear of that buzz sound.

Christine (08:35):

So moving on, what is an after action report?

Megan (08:39):

So an after action report for kids that would say an after action report is sort of similar to a report card. You know, at the end of the quarter or trimester or semester, whatever, your teacher will write down all of the things that went well that semester. All of the things that maybe didn't go so well and they even have a little comment section usually for parents about things to work on in the future. And that's very similar to how we deal with an event in emergency management. So, you know, imagine a storm comes through a town and creates flooding and chaos after that storm passes and we're getting back to normal, we create something called an after action report, which just like a report card will highlight what did the town do well, what did the town do not so well, what needs to be worked on in the future. And you know, what do you and your family or your parents or city or town officials need to focus on to be better prepared for the next event. Do the last five words not count?

Trudy (09:44):

If you could hear them over the timer. And kind of a related term to that. I guess, I don't know if this was on the list that we talked about, but since since the name of our podcast is hotwash, do you want to take like 30 seconds and try to explain the difference between hotwash and after action report?

Megan (10:02):

Yes, so, a hotwash is something that we do immediately following an event, meaning you kind of get the recap while it's fresh in everyone's mind. Whereas the after action report is a more thought out document that happens well after an event, so not in the 30 seconds or 10 minutes following it. A hotwash is like when you have a fight with your sibling in the backyard and your parent comes out to mediate what's going on and it gets resolved. But both siblings still want to immediately tell the parent like how they're feeling about the situation and if they think the result was fair or not. Whereas the after action report is three or four days later, the parent comes out with here's the new policy based on what went well and what didn't go well.

Christine (10:48):

Is that a common parenting strategy? You two with children?

Trudy (10:52):

It sounds pretty apt. Although I don't, I don't know if we even bothered to write down our policies anymore.

Christine ([10:58](#)):

You don't issue policies?

Trudy ([11:00](#)):

It's a fluid policy situation.

Megan ([11:02](#)):

In theory, in theory a parent could be issuing a lot of after action theory. Parenting is actually just a long series of hotwashes.

Christine ([11:14](#)):

Talk to us about full scale exercise and tabletop exercise.

Megan ([11:19](#)):

Alright, so a full scale exercise is like a fire drill on steroids. So the fire drill in school, you're testing one thing which.

Christine ([11:29](#)):

Do you talk about steroids to your children?

Megan ([11:31](#)):

You know, my kids are pretty advanced. I'm not sure they know what steroids are but by this great explanation I'm about to give, they'll figure it out. So they're going to learn the term full scale exercise as well as steroids.

Christine ([11:43](#)):

Bonus.

Megan ([11:44](#)):

In one minute, 40 seconds.

Trudy ([11:44](#)):

One zero eight now.

Megan ([11:47](#)):

Oh geez. Okay. Exercise. Let's see. Imagine you take the fire drill that you normally do, which is you walk out in a line and practice just evacuating and then you add a bunch of elements to it. So you evacuate with your class, but at the same time, the fire department is actually called to the school. They do a sweep through the school. Maybe they even pretend to put out a fire, the school administration and the teachers then go through the motions as if there was actually a fire. They call the parents. Parents have to come to the school and pick up their kids, deal with things about rebuilding and safety issues. That's taking a simple drill and turning it into a full scale exercise where you're testing lots of different operations all at once and you're actually moving resources around. You're moving kids, you're moving things. And that's what moves it from the drill to the full scale exercise. A tabletop is, imagine you didn't

do all that and instead you just talked about it that would be a tabletop exercise where you just discuss what would happen if the school was on fire and how would you evacuate and who would call the fire department and then how would we notify parents?

Trudy ([12:56](#)):

Well done.

Christine ([12:57](#)):

Yeah. Even with my interruption. We're going to pivot into an alternate care site.

Trudy ([13:05](#)):

Because the power of public health compels me! We are hearing about alternate care sites in the news, although they're not always discussed in those terms, but what we're hearing with COVID-19 is people, particularly in Maryland, reactivating hospitals that have been closed, setting up places of care that people with a suspected COVID-19 can go to to receive treatment. And even though that phrase is not always alternate care sites.

Megan ([13:35](#)):

Okay. Alternate care site. Imagine you're riding your bike out front on the street and you fall off. Normally you would come inside to your own house, probably your kitchen or your bathroom, have one of your parents look at it, assess the damages, maybe put on a band-aid or 10 and that's the normal, you know, that'd be your primary care site essentially. Or the normal hospital or doctor's office, you might go to an alternate care site would be, imagine now you go, you fall off your bike, you start running towards your house to get your parents and realize that you're locked out of your own house or that, you know, there's some other reason why you can't get to your bathroom and kitchen. You know, it's already being used for something. There's construction in the house, whatever. So instead you go to the neighbor's house next door and go into their kitchen or bathroom and use their supplies, maybe bandaids. And that would be your alternative.

Trudy ([14:33](#)):

What's next?

Christine ([14:34](#)):

Next. We have crisis standards of care. That one's tricky.

Megan ([14:40](#)):

So in my house, I'm gonna make this definition in a joke at my husband's expense, but since he's not a big podcast listener, hopefully he doesn't find out. Alright. So the normal standard of care, let's say for dinnertime, is you maybe have an entree and a couple sides. And those sides would include vegetables and other balanced things from the food pyramid if we still call it that. And that would be kind of like the normal standard of care. A crisis standard of care is how you adjust your expectations to meet that standard of care during a crisis. So maybe you let a few rules slip in this case with dinner, imagine that mom's traveling out of town and dad is in charge of dinner. The crisis standard of care would be what does he find to be inappropriate dinner ...

Christine ([15:32](#)):

Pizza.

Megan ([15:32](#)):

Right. Maybe there's a little bit less green. There's fewer balance, fewer balancing items, but that would be kind of the crisis standard.

Christine ([15:43](#)):

So one thing we're hearing a lot about is continuity of operations. What is continuity of operations?

Megan ([15:50](#)):

So talking to kids, I would say remember how before all of this, you know, back in February, even the beginning of March, you used to go to school and learn from your teachers. And now we are doing the best that we can with different resources in a different structure, in a different place with some different instructors, including your parents. That is continuity of operations. We're continuing to operate as best we can, given this disruption, meaning we can't operate as we normally would, but we're doing the best we can now. So that's continuity of operations. The continuity of operations plan thinks through those things in advance and documents them so that when you get to a situation like this, you have a roadmap to follow. And now we all know why that is so important.

Christine ([16:44](#)):

True story. You're winning this game, Megan.

Megan ([16:49](#)):

Against my zero opponents.

Christine ([16:52](#)):

Did we talk about prizes, Trudy?

Trudy ([16:52](#)):

You get to work from home for more, more days! For a bonus point, how do we abbreviate continuity of operations? How has that said?

Megan ([17:05](#)):

COOP. So COOP is continuity of operations. If you want to add on the plan, you got to say it for some reason we shortened the first part and we still say the word plan.

Christine ([17:17](#)):

So next up we have the emergency operation center.

Megan ([17:21](#)):

Okay. Uh, the emergency operation center is the place that coordinates all of the details in responding to an emergency. So for my kids, I would say this is like your mother's brain. Um, it doesn't mean, it doesn't mean that she does all the work. It doesn't mean that she's the only responder or even



necessarily the most important responder, but it's the place that takes in information and puts out information. So what resources, what resources are needed, who's dealing with what, who needs help where and all of the logistics. So in a family, a lot of times, you know, that's the mom or the dad's brain, let's say, and in a city or town that they need a brain too. So there's an emergency operation center, which operates kind of in the same way. You know, there's people from all over the jurisdiction that are putting information in and making requests for information and they're sort of, um, the emergency operations center is that master brain that's organizing it all.

Christine ([18:24](#)):

Nice. The master brain.

Trudy ([18:27](#)):

The master brain. I like that.

Christine ([18:28](#)):

Final term, what is recovery?

Megan ([18:32](#)):

Oh, you saved this one for last because it's in the news so much now.

Christine ([18:37](#)):

Yes.

Megan ([18:37](#)):

This is the question on all of our minds. So recovery for emergency management isn't that different from when we think about recovering in other senses. I think it's how we get back to quote normal following a disruption or an emergency. So if we think about COVID-19 and what's going on right now in most of our communities, you know, we're working from home as much as possible. Kids are not going to school. You know, we're wearing masks to the grocery store, there's no birthday parties happening, that kind of stuff. So when we plan about how to recover from this pandemic, what we're going to be thinking about is how do we get back to normal? At what point can we, if ever go to the grocery store without a mask? What point is it acceptable either medically or socially to, you know, have a big kid's birthday party at a bounce house again. When can we go back to shopping in malls and things like that. So recovery in this sense is just planning a phased in approach for what do we start doing now? What do we do in a couple more weeks? What do we do in a couple months and how do we continue on that path over the long term?

Christine ([19:49](#)):

Just as a side note, in the case of COVID-19 we may be planning recovery towards a new normal.

Trudy ([19:57](#)):

Okay. Well, Megan, are there any other important lessons that you think we need to know today as ten-year-olds?

Christine ([20:04](#)):

Oh wait, Megan, you win! You win the grand prize.

Trudy ([20:07](#)):

The prize is more answers. Thank you very much for being on the show and for helping us understand these terms. I think it's appropriate that we ended on recovery because in our next episode, episode five of Hotwash, we are joined by Hassan Sheikh and he will actually be talking to Christina and I about some of those issues of recovery businesses, organizations, health officials, and others are starting to look at what is recovery and what does that look like. So join us next week. And Megan, thank you for being on.