

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Talking Points
1:00 p.m., January 30, 2010

New information is in bold.

U.S. government-wide talking points:

- U.S. agencies have come together in coordination with the government of Haiti, the United Nations, the international community, and voluntary organizations to provide humanitarian assistance following the earthquake. We are here at the invitation of the Haitian government.
- We are coordinating closely with more than 30 nations and hundreds of NGOs to deliver food, water and medical assistance quickly throughout the country.
- Aid is getting to the Haitian people--more today than yesterday, more tomorrow than today. U.S. priorities are life saving and life sustaining assistance for the Haitian people.
- We are overcoming the challenges posed by the enormity of the event - destroyed infrastructure, blocked and destroyed roads, and port capacity.
- In support of the government of Haiti, U.S. assessment teams have already begun evaluating public health requirements, the structural integrity of critical infrastructure, and longer term food and nutrition needs.
- The U.S. government is making every effort to recover, identify and repatriate the remains of U.S. citizens who perished in the earthquake.
- Haitians own their future. We will respect Haitian sovereignty, will directly involve the Haitian people, and will be aligned with the priorities of the government of Haiti.
- This response effort is not just about international aid; it's also about Haitians helping Haitians, and neighbors helping neighbors.
- In addition, USAID is visiting hospitals and clinics to assess medicine shortages and link the health facilities to the Programs On Essential Medicines and Supplies (PROMESS) warehouse. PROMESS houses pharmaceuticals and consumable medical supplies. It is run by the Haitian Ministry of Health and all international inputs are coordinated by the World Health Organization. From the warehouse, supplies are distributed out to the responders as well as to the existing hospitals in Haiti.
- U.S. medical response personnel are working with the UN Health Cluster to help Haiti put in place long-term reconstruction of its public health system better than the system that existed before the earthquake. In addition, CDC personnel are collaborating with international partners and the Haitian government to communicate messages for the Haitian people about their own safety and health.

Specific points about HHS activities:

- HHS has approximately 270 medical personnel on the ground in Haiti. These doctors, nurses, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, and other health professionals are part of the National Disaster Medical System, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HHS activated the National Disaster Medical System and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps to assist in Haitian earthquake relief efforts.
- These personnel are part of the international medical response, led by the United Nations, filling specific requests from the Haitian government. As part of that international medical response, we are working as quickly as we can to help save lives and provide immediate medical care in Haiti.
- Medical teams from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services began providing patient care on Jan. 17.
 - A Disaster Medical Assistance Team and the International Medical Surgical Response Team continue to provide patient care using temporary medical stations set up in a soccer field near a GHESKIO clinic in Port-au-Prince.
 - Additional teams are providing primary care at Thebaud, at the U.S. embassy, and at a Forward Operating Base in Petionville, as well as assisting with medical screening for passengers at the airport and triaging patients flown aboard the Navy hospital ship *USNS Comfort*.
 - **The teams have reported seeing more than 20,800 patients so far, more than 2,200 yesterday. They have performed 71 surgeries and delivered 26 babies.**
 - Although the teams continue to treat traumatic injuries, they report seeing an increasing number of patients with chronic disease, patients who need wound care or basic care.
- Public health experts from the HHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are coordinating with the U.S. Agency for International Development, the government of Haiti, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in public health efforts to support the people of Haiti. The goal is to help alleviate and mitigate public health issues before they become medical issues.
 - The initial response has focused on joining with national and international partners to meet urgent public health needs, and establishing liaisons and coordination needed for successful, long-range public health programs in response to the earthquake.
 - Public health experts from the HHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are working with the Haitian Ministry of Health and the Pan American Health Organization on public health assessment teams to identify health threats.
 - CDC is working with the Haiti National Laboratory to maintain contact with 51 sentinel sites, collating and entering data, analyzing and reporting.
- CDC is working with the U.S. Department of Defense to distribute public health communications messages to the Haitian public through leaflets and radio broadcasts. The information is available in multiple languages.
- CDC staff in Haiti is working with the public health assessment teams that are mapping health threats Haiti now faces, so that donated resources can be directed to areas where they can be used most effectively.

- CDC has also developed a set of resources for relief workers traveling to Haiti to respond to the earthquake. Topics included are vaccination recommendations; medicines, supplies, and equipment needed by travelers to Haiti; and steps to prevent diseases and other health hazards.
http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/earthquakes/haiti/cdc_earthquake_response.asp
- **Approximately 18,000 U.S. citizens have returned to the U.S. from Haiti. Of these, approximately 17,500 have arrived in Florida as of 1/28.** ACF-funded repatriation services, such as medical attention, food, short-term lodging, transportation or logistics for their onward flights in the United States, were provided to **approximately 6,600 American citizens**, and coordinated by the state emergency repatriation teams.
- An HHS medical team from the National Disaster Medical System is now working from the Homestead Air Base in Florida to provide medical care for U.S. citizens returning from Haiti.
- Teams currently in Haiti are from Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Missouri, Ohio and Florida.
- An HHS Incident Response Coordination Team is coordinating the HHS response on the ground to provide medical assistance for the people of Haiti. A second Incident Response Coordination Team is coordinating the HHS medical support for repatriating U.S. citizens at Homestead Air Base.

Background

- The National Disaster Medical System was designed as part of an integrated national response, temporarily augmenting state and local authorities in dealing with the medical impacts of major peacetime disasters. The NDMS can also provide support to the military and the Department of Veterans Affairs medical systems in caring for casualties evacuated back to the U.S. from overseas armed conventional conflicts. The NDMS provides medical response to a disaster area in the form of personnel, supplies, and equipment, patient movement from a disaster site to unaffected areas of the nation and within the U.S., can provide definitive medical care at participating U.S. hospitals in unaffected areas. The NDMS team members have non-federal jobs and become federal employees intermittently to support a disaster.
- The U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps has more than 6,500 full-time, well-trained, highly qualified public health professionals dedicated to delivering the Nation's public health promotion and disease prevention programs and advancing public health science. These men and women serve on the frontlines in the Nation's fight against disease and poor health conditions. As one of America's seven uniformed services, the Commissioned Corps fills essential public health leadership and service roles within U.S. government agencies and programs.

About donating goods and services:

- The best way to meet the needs in Haiti is in a coordinated effort with the U.N. and the Haitian Ministry of Health. HHS is determining how civilian health and medical volunteers can best support long-term relief efforts in Haiti.
- HHS has set up an email where medical professionals can send offers of volunteer medical care services. Haiti.volunteer@hhs.gov Those interested in volunteering can send an email that includes name, clinical area, specialty skills, degrees, and language capabilities (in particular, whether the volunteer speaks Haitian Creole or French and if so, level of fluency). This information will be logged and it will be shared with USAID. Volunteers may be contacted if an opportunity becomes available that matches the volunteer's skill set.

- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State are responsible for coordinating the provision of resources to Haiti. Resources are provided only at the request of the Haitian government based on its assessment of the country's needs. Once a request is made, federal agencies must determine the most appropriate source for the requested item.
- The situation is changing rapidly. As we learn more about specific needs in Haiti and we determine ways to deliver resources we will be able to target donations more directly to where they are most needed. We will contact interested people as the situation warrants and may offer additional guidance at that time.
- All offers of assistance are greatly appreciated. We hope everyone will keep in mind that the ability to accept an offer often depends on such considerations as current needs and logistics. Just by making your resources available through this process you are making a significant contribution to the relief efforts.