



Office of the Assistant Secretary for  
Preparedness & Response

National Biodefense Science Board  
Washington, D.C. 20201

September 22, 2010

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

On December 11, 2009, the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) requested that the National Biodefense Science Board (NBSB) form a Working Group (WG) to explore the following:

- NBSB priorities for the future;
- An analysis of the current NBSB WGs - including membership and the expertise that each member provides;
- Whether the tasks and responsibilities of each WG remains appropriate; and what, if any, new tasks should be undertaken; and
- Interaction of the Disaster Mental Health Subcommittee with NBSB.

In response to this request, the NBSB formed the *Future of the NBSB WG*, which met June 22-23, 2010, in Washington, DC. The WG discussed topics consistent with the expertise of the NBSB members and those believed to be relevant to the public health of the American people. The WG proposes either developing WGs or addressing issues in the following topic areas, and looks forward to discussing these with the ASPR.

Suggested Short Term Priority Areas:

1. Address the unique characteristics of at-risk populations and how these characteristics impact preparedness and emergency responses.
2. Enhancing community resilience.
3. Enhancing the use of e-health technologies for preparedness and response.
4. Improving FDA engagement with the public and private sectors on regulatory science and decision theory.

Suggested Long Term Priority Areas:

1. Provide advice on the development of the health security workforce.
2. Provide advice on the National Health Security Strategy, for example, the Biennial Implementation Plan.
3. Provide advice on both past and future performances of NDMS, and how this board can best fulfill its mission.
4. Provide advice on the inclusion of emerging infectious diseases in biodefense and health security planning
5. Address the prioritization of MCM strategic planning and requirements.
6. Assess the adequacy and integration of distribution and dispensing plans.

Next, the group analyzed the NBSB WGs, discussed the membership and expertise of each member, evaluated whether the tasks and responsibilities of each WG remain appropriate, and what, if any new tasks should be undertaken. The following conclusions were reached:

1. The current collection of NBSB WGs satisfies the overarching mission of the Board. We do propose changing the name of the NBSB *Personal Preparedness WG* to the *Personal and Community Resilience WG*, which addresses your request to further emphasize issues related to resilience.
2. The current expertise of the Board is sufficient. When requested, the Board is able to effectively reach out, gaining additional knowledge and expertise related to specific topics.
3. The current approach to forming and completing WG assignments (webinars, preparatory calls, face-to-face/teleconference meetings, etc) is successful.

In reference to the interaction of the Disaster Mental Health (DMH) Subcommittee with the NBSB, the WG appreciates the work the DMH Subcommittee has accomplished thus far, and is looking forward to the Subcommittee's assessment on the Department's progress to better integrate behavioral health into emergency preparedness and response activities in September. The Board would like to continue to discuss how best to further the interaction and integration of the Subcommittee with the NBSB.

In addition to the four topics you requested direct feedback on, the *Future of the NBSB WG* would like to suggest several options for potential re-nomination of current NBSB members, and the Chair position, to ensure the continued effectiveness of the Board.

1. Re-nomination/re-appointment consistent with the current NBSB Charter; almost all of the members with 2010 expiring terms have expressed interest in reappointment.
2. Propose amending the current Charter to include the staggering of current members for efficient continuity of the Board's activities. Current members rotating off would have the option for re-appointment for one or two years; with no more than three to four members rotating off in each year. This would allow for transition of only one-third or one-fourth of the members each year, rather than half in some years.
3. New members receive three-year terms, with transition of one-third each year.
4. Chair position
  - a. Chair should be a current NBSB member whom has served for at least one year;
  - b. Establishment of a vice-chair position with potential ascendance to chair.

Outlined above are our thoughts on future topics where we feel the Board could provide advice; we look forward to a discussion on these areas of interest, as well as any topics you would like the Board to address. We continue to look toward work we will accomplish together in ensuring the public health and preparedness of our nation.

Sincerely,

/s/ Patricia Quinlisk, M.D.

Patricia Quinlisk, M.D., M.P.H.  
Chair, National Biodefense Science Board