

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**What:** Local Responders attend Homeland Security Training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama

Local Emergency Responders from the Community Health Center of Branch County as well as the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency recently completed Homeland Security training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) in Anniston, Alabama. The CDP is operated by the US Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and is the only Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) training facility in the nation.

Jim Cook and John Robertson from the Community Health Agency and William Earl and Bruce Gregory from the Community Health Center of Branch County attended this 3 day training targeting preparation for a pandemic influenza outbreak, and working toward a collaborative community response to reduce illness and death associated with this type of international outbreak. Two days of intensive classroom training were followed by a day-long tabletop exercise that walked participants through an actual scenario and included real-world injects to test the groups knowledge and reactions to problems and distractions that would most certainly occur during a world-wide outbreak.

The training and the tabletop exercise are intended to train a handful of the nations' 11 million first responders in planning and preparing to react to a nationwide emergency such as the pandemic flu outbreak of 1918 that killed 675,000 Americans and 40 to 60 million persons world-wide. These types of trainings ensure that first responders gain the critical skills and confidence necessary to effectively respond to local or national incidents.

Thirty nine first responders from southwest Michigan attended this training including State, regional and local first responders and planners. Hospital personnel, county emergency management, law enforcement, Health Department staff and many other first responders in Branch County have been working collaboratively on response plans for several years to prepare to meet the challenge of responding to a variety of disasters, including pandemic flu, and this national training provided another tool in preparing for a response to an emergency situation.