



CommonHealth ACTION
Catalyst for health

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The New Orleans-based Center for Empowered Decision Making (CEDM) is partnering with CommonHealth ACTION to assist Katrina evacuees transition from shelters and temporary living arrangements to re-establish more permanent roots. Through a generous grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the *Safe Recovery Partnership* will work to assess the needs of Katrina evacuees, solicit participation from and build capacity among community-based organizations, provide opportunities for public dialogue related to pre- and post-Katrina events, connect individuals and families to existing resources, and share findings and recommendations for public benefit. These activities will inform rebuilding efforts so that mistakes from the Katrina disaster are never repeated.

Headed by Dr. Shelia Webb, the New Orleans-based Center for Empowered Decision Making has temporarily relocated to Baton Rouge. Since the hurricane, CEDM staff has provided support services to displaced Orleanians that relocated to the Baton Rouge area. "Displaced residents are suffering greatly. Evacuees most immediate and critical needs, housing, health care, and mental health services, have not been met. Without the stability of housing, displaced residents simply cannot move on with their lives, re-settle their children, or secure jobs. Their transitional and long-term housing needs must be addressed in order to help people begin the process of recovery emotionally and physically and to re-establish our communities," said Dr. Webb.

When asked about CommonHealth ACTION's role in the Safe Recovery Partnership for Katrina Survivors, Dr. Vincent Lafronza said, "Our mission is to help people and organizations maximize their potential to improve the health of communities, families, and individuals. CommonHealth ACTION is honored to support CEDM's efforts to facilitate the safe return home of evacuees, whether that entails returning to New Orleans or another locale of choice. Our U.S. constitution continues to support the values of liberty and justice for all. We must work hard to ensure that all evacuees have an opportunity to return to their communities if they so choose, and not only those who have the financial means to do so. We will provide technical assistance to create public space to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. This is critical work and we invite support from other interested individuals and organizations."

CommonHealth ACTION also plans to work with other communities in Louisiana and surrounding Gulf States. Our progress and lessons learned will be posted at www.commonhealthaction.org.

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CommonHealth ACTION is a national, nonprofit organization based in the District of Columbia. Its mission is to help people and organizations maximize their potential to improve the health of communities, families, and individuals.