

Introduction

Developing an appropriate and effective inter-agency notification and communication program is a primary objective in emergency preparedness. Coordinated planning across disciplines that have their own protocols and procedures, complexities and culture presents a challenge for all sectors. Health-related programs must develop effective systems with coalitions that incorporate state and local government agencies as well as hospitals and other private health care entities.

What is PEER?

Partnership for Effective Emergency Response (PEER) is a healthcare coalition created to enhance the communication capacity in Greater Boston during health and medical emergencies and disasters.

PEER includes the five discipline areas of hospitals (28), local health departments (62), long-term care facilities (227), emergency medical services (70), and community health centers (31) that serve 2.2 million people in Preparedness Regions 4A, 4B, and 4C.

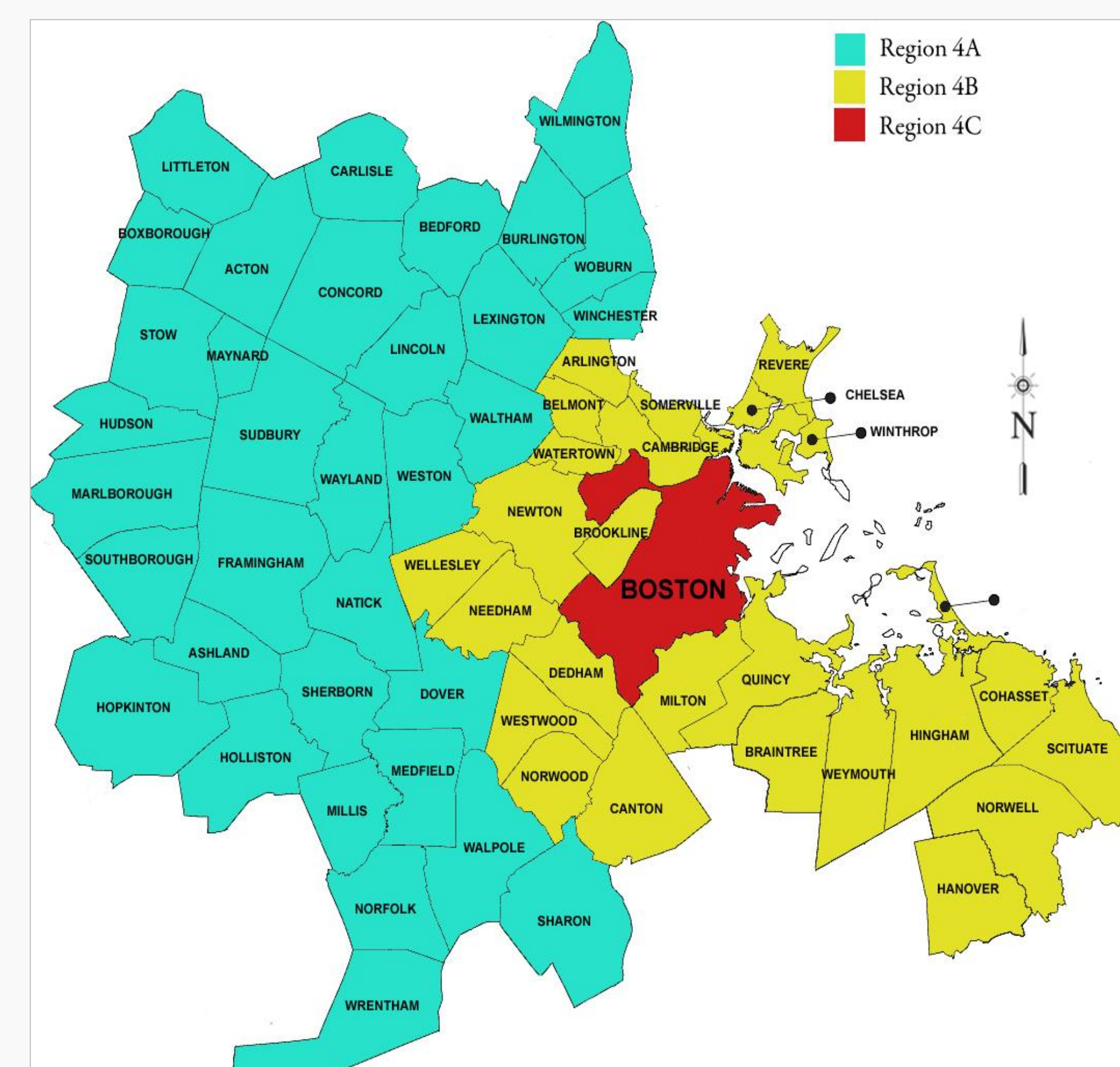
Objectives

- Develop an emergency notification and communication system
- Improve communication protocols and policies
- Provide training on system technology and protocols
- Enroll member organizations into system
- Expand system through incorporation into existing organizational emergency communications plans

Coalition Formation & Engagement

Massachusetts' counties do not hold jurisdictional power, but rather its cities and towns do. As a result, PEER has formed partnerships with organizations within the 62 cities and towns of Greater Boston.

Partner Regions



Engagement Strategies

To bring together organizations from multiple disciplines, PEER has done the following:

- Developed web-based trainings to reduce training burden
- Conducted assessments of existing disciplinary capacities for mutual aid and response support
- Recruited operations level staff for communications protocol working groups
- Provided recommendations to state health department for changes in processes

Program Development

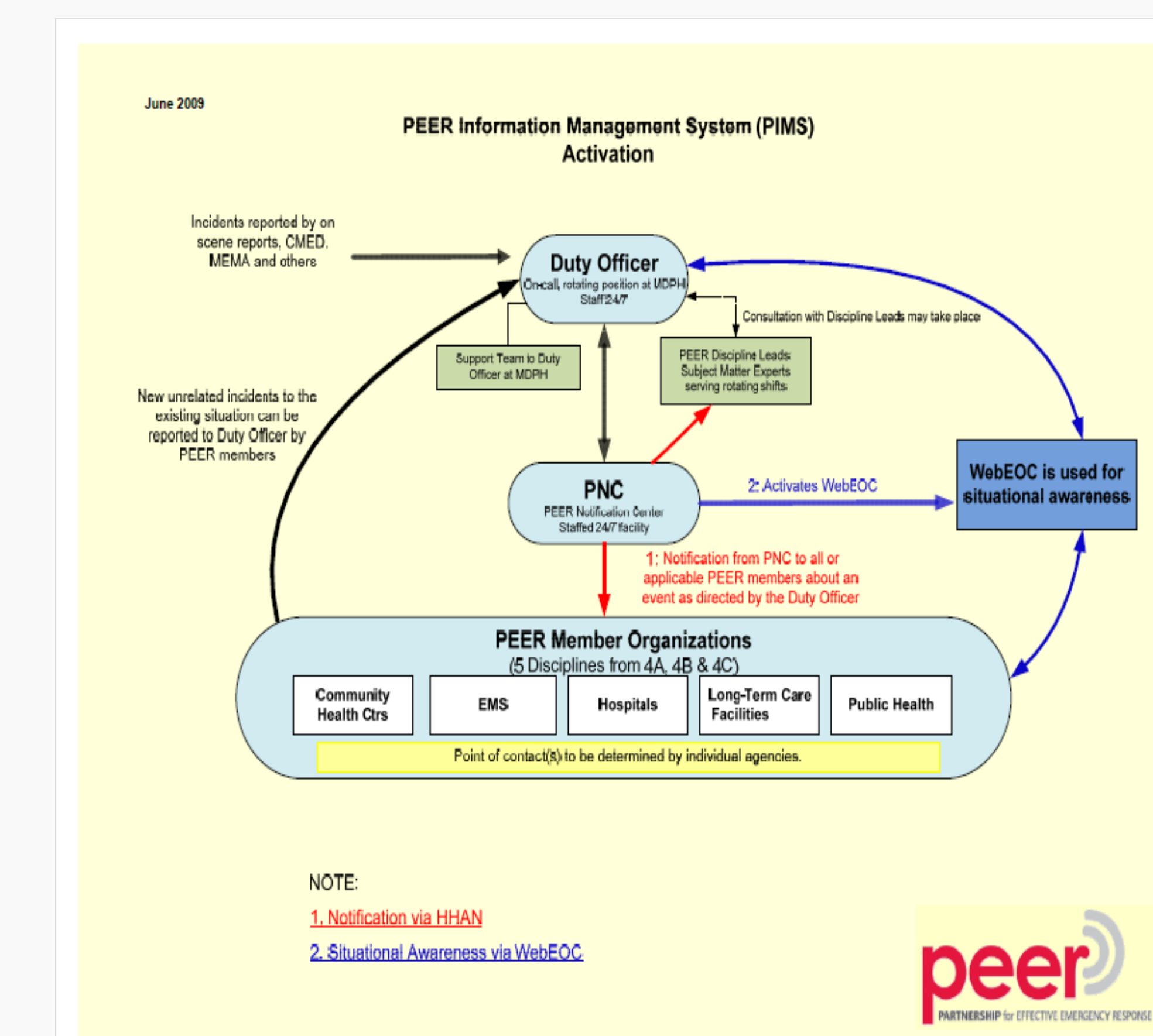
Approaches

- Develop, strengthen, and maintain partnerships and collaboration
- Focus on processes, systems, & measurable outcomes
- Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle
- Learning Collaborative method

MDPH WebEOC

MDPH WebEOC is a web-based communications platform whose use supports the creation and maintenance of situational awareness during an incident. The system allows for active communication of facility status and incident status among multiple organizations.

PEER Information Management System



Challenges

- Med surge's uneven impact on disciplines
- Impact of decreased budgets and increased focus on return-on-investment (ROI) at the organizational level in healthcare

Key Achievements

- Develop Communications System
- PEER Trainings
- Functional exercises 2009 and 2010 and communication drills
- Mutual aid and resource management systems inventories

System Adoption

The PEER Information Management System has been adopted in a modified form by the Emergency Preparedness Bureau at the Mass Department of Public Health

Next Steps

- Applying new Federal guidance pertaining to healthcare coalitions
- Fostering continuous engagement among member organizations
- Completing the implementation of mutual aid agreements within PEER disciplines

Acknowledgements

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