



EXPERT PERSPECTIVE:

## Naya Lindsey

Managing Consultant

Dr. Naya Lindsey joined the consulting division of OptumServe in 2010 and is a managing consultant focused on policy and research. She is a subject-matter expert in disaster/emergency management and has experience spanning federal, state and local sectors of government. Much of her work has focused on identifying ways to improve preparedness, response and recovery for persons at-risk of encountering displacement, injury and/or death as a result of adverse events.

Dr. Lindsey has extensive experience with project management, program development and evaluation, focus group moderation, interview administration and coalition-building. Having worked in public, private, academic and non-profit sectors, she offers a broad range of knowledge on and has been instrumental in the development of health policy and programming related to environmental health, epidemiology and health equity.

Dr. Lindsey holds a doctorate in public health (environmental health) from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a master's degree in veterinary medicine (epidemiology) from Virginia–Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine–Virginia Tech. She attended undergrad at Claflin University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in biology.

## Q&A

### **Q: How do the fields of health equity and disaster/emergency management intersect?**

NL: Health equity is essentially the core goal of effective public health and medical disaster/emergency management. In all phases, we want to ensure that everyone has equitable access to resources that will help them prepare, respond and recover from a disaster or emergency event. Many times, persons that already experience health inequities prior to a disaster/emergency encounter similar barriers when attempting to prepare, respond and recover from an event. As a wise colleague pointed out, we may all be in the same storm but some of us are in yachts, some of us are on rafts, and some of us don't even have a life vest.

### **Q: How does COVID-19 affect how we prepare and respond to disasters?**

NL: COVID-19 has limited our ability to interact socially. While this has affected some ways that we prepare, respond and recover from disaster/emergency events, it has not stopped the work of our first responders, nor has it affected their ability to adequately respond. COVID-19 has undoubtedly caused challenges in some aspects of their work (e.g., training exercises and shelters); however, the community has come up with creative ways to continue the work while simultaneously responding to COVID-19. In addition, although COVID-19 may not immediately come to mind when we think of more common disaster/emergency events (e.g., hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires), COVID-19 is indeed a long-term emergency event and one that will require our attention for the foreseeable future.

## Q: How has OptumServe assisted federal agencies with disaster preparedness?

NL: For more than 15 years, the consulting division of OptumServe has assisted a number of federal agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services with preparedness, response, and recovery programming and policy issues. Our work has included program evaluation and development for volunteer health professionals, rostering, training and exercise, strategic planning, health workforce issues, hospital preparedness planning, climate change, and public and mental health services. More recently, we are addressing vaccine hesitancy through [Vaccine Outreach — Implementing Community Engagement \(VOICE\)](#). This solution is a comprehensive, data-driven approach that supports efforts towards the inclusive and equitable administration of the COVID-19 vaccine to populations at-risk of contracting COVID-19 and for those populations experiencing barriers to receiving the vaccine.

## About OptumServe

OptumServe™ is the federal health services business of Optum and UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH). We are proud to partner with the Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs and other organizations to help modernize the U.S. health system and improve the health and well-being of those we collectively serve.

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