

# Clear Emergency Communication

By Devora Chavez

**D**uring emergencies, clear communication can make a difference between life and death, especially for vulnerable populations.

The Northwest Center for Public Health Practice is partnering with public health and public safety agencies to improve emergency communication. The Center, housed in the University of Washington School of Public Health, received a five-year CDC grant to establish the Northwest Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center (NW PERRC).

One of the first projects is to help the Seattle area's 911 dispatchers assist limited-English proficient (LEP) callers. Professor Hendrika Meischke's study initially focuses on Mandarin and Cantonese-

speakers.

At Public Health – Seattle & King County, Hilary Karasz and Meredith Li-Vollmer are studying whether texting is an effective way to communicate with young people during an emergency. They are studying rural, urban, Spanish-speaking, deaf or hard-of-hearing, and Native American teenagers.

Janet Baseman, an assistant professor of Epidemiology at UW, is working in urban and rural Montana and Washington to compare the effectiveness of various emergency communication systems (text, phone, e-mail, fax, Internet). For more information, visit [www.nwcphp.org/public-health-systems-research/nwperrc](http://www.nwcphp.org/public-health-systems-research/nwperrc), or contact Devora Chavez at [devora@u.washington.edu](mailto:devora@u.washington.edu). ■

## Author

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