



# NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

## IMPROVING READINESS THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

# Public Availability Session

## What is a Public Availability Session?

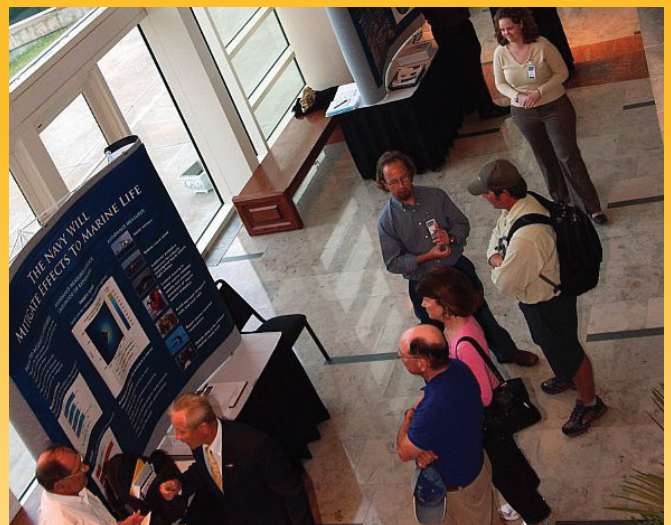
There are several formats in which to conduct a public meeting. A public meeting is an excellent way to communicate information when the level of interest or concern is high and/or there is a large amount of information to be shared. A public availability session, or an “open house” style meeting, is simply one public meeting format. A public availability session, like all public meetings, is open to the general public and can serve small or large groups. It is a more informal format than a town hall meeting or public hearing.

### Pros

- Can meet most legal public outreach requirements
- Provides information at a pace that is comfortable for everyone
- Assists in communicating information through visual aids
- Encourages two-way communication
- Provides an opportunity for one-on-one interaction
- Provides a way to share a variety of layered information that meets individual information needs
- No need to limit the number of questions or time for each response
- No one has to be a public speaker

### Cons

- May lead to inconsistent communication if proper team preparation is not conducted
- Does not always satisfy attendees who would like to publicly comment in front of their peers
- Does not always satisfy attendees who would prefer to learn through a formal presentation



Visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center at:

<https://www.med.navy.mil/Navy-Marine-Corps-Public-Health-Center/Environmental-Health/Environmental-Programs/>



# NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

## IMPROVING READINESS THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

### How is the Room Prepared?



#### 1. Place a Welcome table near the entrance

- a. Sign in sheet
- b. Distribute handouts (fact sheets, etc.)

#### 2. Set up Topic-specific stations around the room

- a. Poster displays
- b. Multi-media visual aids

#### 3. Locate Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) at each station

- a. Attendees move around the room at their own pace, conversing one-on-one with the SMEs

A welcome table is set up near the entrance of the room so attendees may sign in as they enter the meeting and obtain information materials, such as fact sheets. Topic-specific stations are set up around the room, with one or more poster displays or multimedia visual aids at each station. Subject matter experts are located at each station. Attendees may move around the room at their own pace, typically in a clockwise fashion, and converse one-on-one with the subject matter experts. Public availability sessions are usually scheduled for a specific amount of time but do not include an agenda. Tables are set up for attendees to submit verbal and oral comments. Sometimes, a court reporter will be available to record oral comments. Otherwise, oral comments are captured by a voice recorder.

The project team should be involved in the preparation of the poster displays and multimedia visual aids, easels, information materials and other. In addition, developing a set of key messages and practicing responses to frequently

#### 4. Schedule the session for a specific period of time

- a. No agenda is developed

#### 5. Tables may be set up for attendees to submit verbal and/or written comments

- a. Sometimes a court recorder will be available to transcribe verbal comments
- b. Verbal comments may be captured by a voice recorder

asked or anticipated questions will prepare the team for interacting with the public. Responses should be clear and consistent. NMCPHC can assist with team preparation and facilitate team development of key messages and materials for the meeting. This assistance, commonly referred to by NMCPHC as a “Risk Communication Strategy Session” is best conducted approximately one month before the public availability session, if time allows.

### For more information:

#### CONTACT:

**Paul Gillooly, Ph.D. CA PT, MSC, USN (Ret)**  
**Environmental Programs**

Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center  
620 John Paul Jones Circle, Suite 1100,  
Portsmouth, VA 23708 • 757-953-0664  
paul.b.gillooly.civ@mail.mil

Visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center at:

<https://www.med.navy.mil/Navy-Marine-Corps-Public-Health-Center/Environmental-Health/Environmental-Programs/>