

08-03

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

### IMPROVING NOTIFIABLE DISEASE REPORTING

#### Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports an evaluation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with state and local health departments, to improve the notifiable disease reporting process. A notifiable disease<sup>[1]</sup> is one that physicians and other mandated reporters<sup>[2]</sup> are legally required by state or local statute to report to an appropriate public health authority. NACCHO recommends that CDC allocate sufficient categorical funding to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the notifiable disease reporting process. The key outcome of this evaluation should be specific rules and regulations that can be implemented by state and local health departments to improve the notifiable disease reporting process.

#### Justification

Public health agencies are authorized to collect morbidity data on notifiable diseases. This enables public health officials to initiate timely investigations and to exercise appropriate disease prevention measures. As a by-product of disease notification, state and local health departments produce statistics that are used nationally for disease surveillance purposes. The following areas of concern are barriers to improving overall reporting and compliance by mandated reporting entities:

*Completeness and timeliness of reporting.* Incomplete reporting, lack of consistent national standards, and a lack of timely reporting have created significant barriers to appropriate and effective disease-specific control measures since delays between the onset of illness and receipt of disease notification can facilitate further spread of infection.

*Expanding list of entities required to report notifiable diseases.* An expanding list of notifiable diseases (e.g., West Nile Virus) has negatively impacted the reporting of all notifiable diseases, particularly by private providers. Expanding the number of mandated reporters may help to address this issues.<sup>3</sup>

*Distribution of information is important.* It is important that communicable disease surveillance data be shared with the original reporting entities. This can help improve reporting behavior because reporting entities will have the opportunity to directly benefit (e.g., evaluate their practices) from their reporting actions.

*Variations in reporting habits amongst providers.* Mandated reporting entities are more likely to comply during an epidemic or other well publicized public health emergency. CDC can leverage these circumstances to improve reporting of all notifiable disease by working with state and local health departments to develop



specific rules and regulations regarding reporting notifiable diseases. This also improves overall epidemiology capacity within state and local health departments.

*Legal requirements.* Education related to legal reporting requirements can be done in partnership with the Council of State & Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and professional organizations such as the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Provider and practitioner education should stress the importance of timely notifiable disease reporting.

### **Record of Action**

*Proposed by the Infectious Disease Prevention & Control Workgroup, September 2007*

*Approved by Community Health Essential Services Committee, February 2008*

*Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors, June 2008*

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<sup>[1]</sup> Disease, case, condition, or cluster of people with symptoms

<sup>[2]</sup> Such others vary by state and local law and may include school nurses, EMS personnel, hospitals, laboratories, day care centers and other infection control personnel

<sup>3</sup>Additional reporting sites can include day care centers, EMS, school nurses, laboratories, nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, and correctional facilities.