Session: Building IPC Workforce Capacity for State and Local Health Departments in Today's World

Objective

- Describe at least 2 actions state health agency leadership can take to support state HAI/AR programs engaging in infection prevention and control (IPC) work.

About ASTHO

- The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) represents state health department leadership in all US states and territories
  - State Health Official, Health Secretary, Chief Medical Officer, State Health Commissioner, Deputy Health Commissioner, and more
  - [ASTHO Member Directory](#)
- ASTHO serves state health department leadership and state health department programs through a wide range of capacity-building and technical assistance offerings

Background

- Healthcare-associated infection/Antimicrobial Resistance (HAI/AR) programs received significant federal investments to bolster their ability to prevent and respond to COVID-19.

- The future of some of these funding streams is uncertain, while need for HAI prevention and response support remains significant.

- To maximize existing investments and strategize managing programs through uncertainty, HAI/AR programs need support from S/THA leaders and their partners.

8 Ways Health Department Leaders Can Support Effective HAI/AR Programs

Connect routinely with HAI/AR program staff.

Reassess the organizational structure for HAI/AR fit.

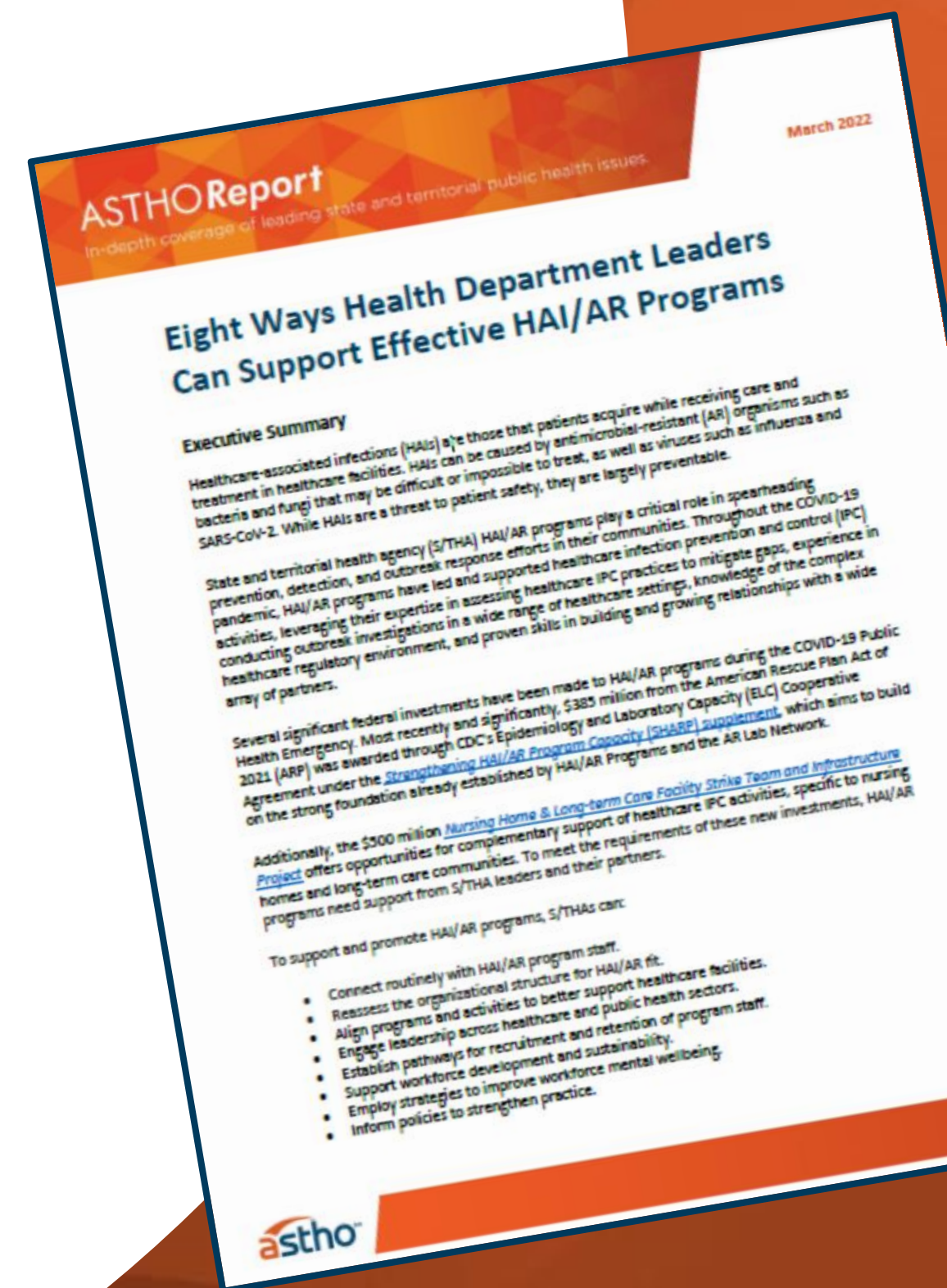Align programs and activities to better support healthcare facilities.

Engage leadership across healthcare and public health sectors.

Establish pathways for recruitment and retention of program staff.

Support workforce development and sustainability.

Employ strategies to improve workforce mental wellbeing.

Inform policies to strengthen practice.

Connect routinely with HAI/AR program staff

Why?
- Learn about the breadth and depth of HAI/AR program activities
- Better understand the changing landscape of HAI/AR

How?
- Establishing regular communication to foster shared awareness of HAI/AR and leadership priorities.
- Ensure that HAI/AR programs have adequate administrative support so staff with IPC expertise can focus on technical activities.
- Promote and share the achievements and efforts of HAI/AR programs with policymakers and include these updates in annual reports.

Evaluate Where HAI/AR Programs Sit

Why?

- Ensure HAI/AR programs are well positioned organizationally with the visibility needed to be successful.
- Ensure barriers are mitigated and HAI/AR program growth and expansion are supported.

How?

- Evaluate the following questions:
  - Does the current organizational reporting structure support the current and future needs of the HAI/AR program and health department goals?
  - How can S/THA leadership use organizational reporting structures to improve collaboration across the health department?
  - Are the achievements and efforts of the HAI/AR program routinely shared with leadership, policy makers, and other stakeholders?

Align programs and activities to support healthcare facilities

Why?

- Reduce duplication of efforts, align resources across the organization, and facilitate appropriate and efficient spenddown of funds.
- Ensure clear roles and responsibilities of the HAI/AR program vs other programs.

How?

- Build awareness of department activities
- Promote relationship-building and department-wide collaboration for an integrated approach to support healthcare facilities.
- Incorporate HAI/AR priorities and objectives within state Health Improvement Plans
- Consider citing HAI/AR program activities to meet health department accreditation standards and measures.

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Engage leadership across healthcare and public health sectors

Why?

- Establish strong relationships.
- Better coordinate approaches to support various healthcare settings.

How?

- Clarify the role of the HAI/AR program as a supportive partner to healthcare surveyors.
- Promote the HAI/AR program as a non-regulatory partner to healthcare facilities.
- Participate in the HAI/AR program's Advisory Committee meetings to engage partners for strategic planning and decision-making, data sharing, and coordinating IPC activities.
- Invite HAI/AR program staff to discussions with external partners.
- Collaborate with healthcare partners to highlight the importance of automated and timely data exchange efforts.

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Establish pathways for recruitment and retention

Why?

- HAI/AR programs require specialized expertise.
- HAI/AR programs often compete with clinical settings to recruit and retain qualified staff.

How?

- Ensure titles and salaries of program leadership reflect the increase in associated responsibilities.
- Consider opportunities to optimize efficient contracting processes and minimizing administrative impediments for recruitment.
- Explore options to bolster health department ability to remain competitive, such as allowing flexible and partial remote work schedules. These benefits can help HAI/AR Programs stay competitive when salary ranges may be less flexible.

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Support efforts for workforce development and sustainability

Why?
- HAI/AR programs require specialized expertise.
- HAI/AR programs often compete with clinical settings to recruit and retain qualified staff.

How?
- Create and sustain opportunities for workforce development, including training and professional development opportunities for public health students and healthcare professionals such as practicums, internships, and fellowships.
- Foster long-term relationships with academic institutions and credentialing programs, healthcare facilities, and professional associations to facilitate continued professional development.

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Employ strategies to improve workforce mental well-being

Why?

- Reduce turnover, burnout, and improve sustainability of HAI/AR and IPC expertise.

How?

- Consider a pair or team approach for staff visiting facilities to decrease pressure and to ensure peer support.
- Support HAI/AR Program recruitment; adequate staff coverage supports ability of staff to use their personal time-off.
- Support staff with resources on how to de-escalate hostile conversations and safely exit unsafe environments that may take a toll on their mental well-being.
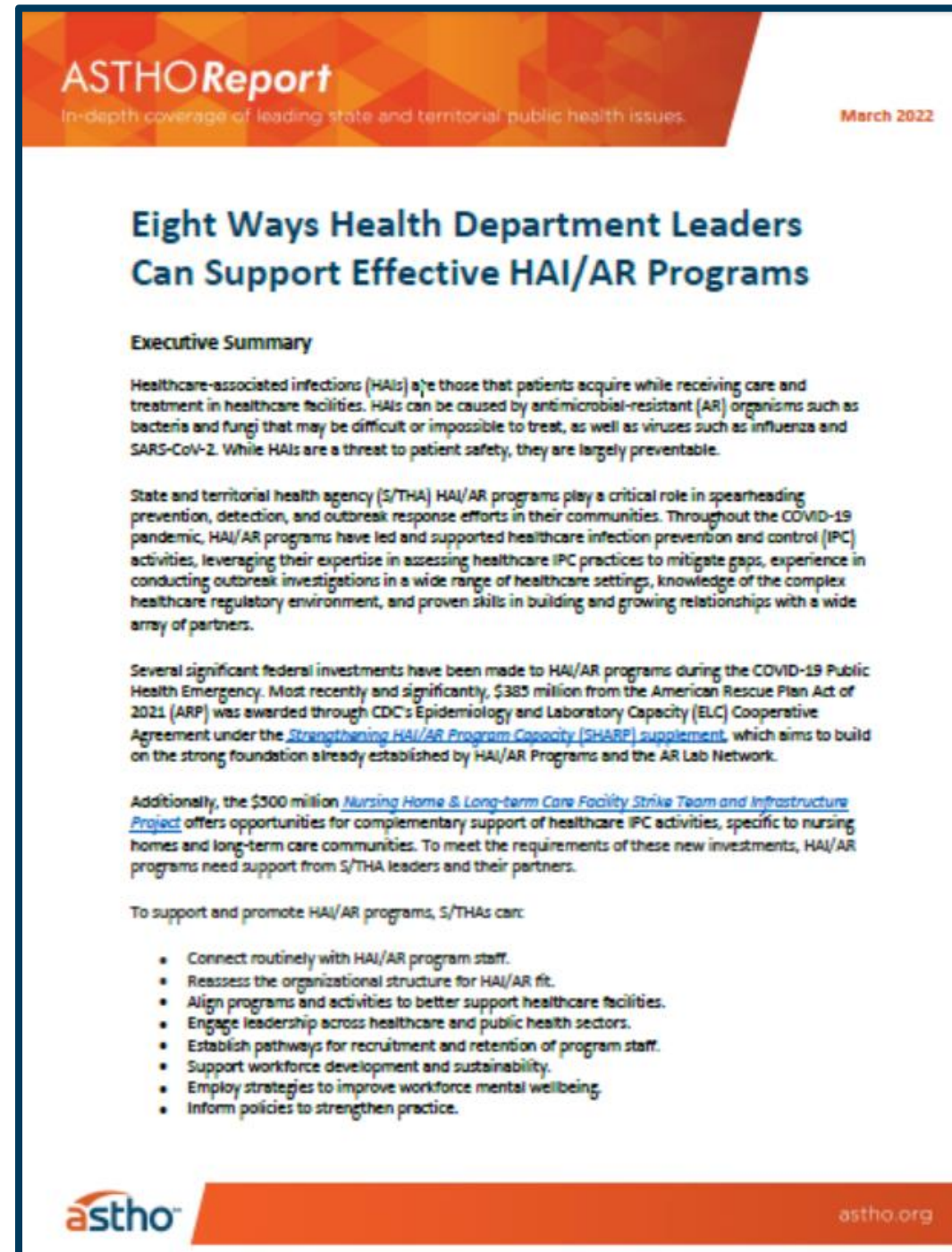
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Inform policies to strengthen practice

Why?

- The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to implement and strengthen policies to enhance IPC efforts across the healthcare delivery system.

How?

- Advocate for and inform policies to enhance IPC efforts across the healthcare delivery system
- Develop policies in consultation with HAI/AR programs and subject-matter experts
  - E.g. Policies to enhance HAI/AR outbreak reporting and notification practices, as well as policies to ensure adequate staffing in LTCFs.

ASTHO Resources

ASTHO Resources

https://youtu.be/jwNtuT6-w4Q?si=Kka6644NTSmQn8Xv

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQQ3tuJw6TI

ASTHO Resources

TIPS FOR ENGAGING POLICYMAKERS
TO ADVANCE STATE HAI PREVENTION
POLICY INITIATIVES

#PublicHealthProtects

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WWW.ASTHO.ORG/HAI

https://www.astho.org/globalassets/pdf/tips-engaging-policymakers-to-advance-hai-prevention-policy-initiatives.pdf

Looking Ahead

- Microlearning

- Boundary Spanning Leadership

Questions?

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