

07-01

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Collaboration in Infectious Disease Prevention and Control

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) recognizes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) leadership in developing policies and guidance to protect the public from the spread of infectious diseases. NACCHO appreciates CDC's consideration of local health department roles in the successful implementation of national policies and guidance. NACCHO requests that CDC continue to acknowledge the critical role local health departments play in infectious disease prevention and response by collaborating with NACCHO to ensure local health department representation and perspectives are incorporated into all aspects of CDC policy and guidance development.

Justification

NACCHO recognizes the continued need for increased engagement between CDC and local health departments to prevent and control infectious diseases. Local health departments value CDC's technical expertise in developing infectious disease related policies and guidelines but often face challenges with implementing recommendations that do not reflect current local circumstances. Collaboration between CDC, NACCHO, and its local health department constituents maximizes and leverages the unique strengths of each partner to ensure a more coordinated and effective approach to infectious disease prevention and response.

CDC plays an important role in support of local health departments in many ways, including:

- Supporting local health departments' ability to detect and respond to infectious disease cases and outbreaks through national surveillance systems and alerts;
- Providing important subject matter expertise in the event of an outbreak of an emerging infectious disease; and
- Providing logistics, communication, analytics and other support functions during an emergency response.

Local health departments are on the front lines protecting their communities from infectious diseases through activities such as:

- Responding to investigating cases and outbreaks of infectious disease;
- Conducting ongoing surveillance and control activities, and managing infectious disease reporting systems;
- Isolating infectious cases, and tracing and quarantining (as appropriate) contacts to limit further spread; and



- Leading proactive community activities and prevention efforts, including: providing technical assistance, education and training, conducting community outreach, and convening discussions between local stakeholders regarding community-level prevention strategies and challenges.

NACCHO helps to strengthen and bridge the relationship between CDC and local health departments and improves communication in the following ways:

- Ensuring local needs, capacity, and perspectives are accurately reflected in federal guidance, which is essential to increase the likelihood that national guidance can and will be implemented;
- Providing technical assistance to local health departments in operationalizing CDC guidance; and
- Facilitating collaboration and sharing of best practices, which improves the capacity to prevent and control infectious diseases.

The 2009 influenza A (H1N1) pandemic highlighted unprecedented collaboration between CDC and local health departments. CDC and NACCHO subsequently leveraged the lessons learned from the 2009 H1N1 response to engage with local health departments and prepare for the potential emergence of avian influenza A (H7N9) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus in the United States. Collaboration between CDC, NACCHO, and local health departments was necessary throughout the 2014-2015 domestic response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, in monitoring travelers from affected countries and ensuring tiered triage of ill travelers to healthcare facilities. The domestic cases of Ebola in 2014 also emphasized the unique role local health departments have in tracing contacts. The need for close partnership between national and local public health can be seen in the response to the outbreaks of Zika virus in 2016, including cases in travelers, where local health departments are responsible for critical activities, including: human case surveillance, coordinating diagnostic testing, conducting and facilitating mosquito abatement, and responding to questions from providers and the public.

Historically, collaboration between CDC and local health departments has included, but not been limited to, inviting local health departments to participate in teleconferences between CDC and state health departments and placing a NACCHO representative in CDC Emergency Operations Center, as needed, to convey the unique perspectives and needs of local health departments. Maintaining local engagement has also been achieved through inclusion of local health department representatives in selected CDC workgroups and steering committees. Similarly, NACCHO advisory groups have consulted with CDC subject matter experts regarding communicable disease issues, approaches, and resources. NACCHO advisory groups have proven to be a valuable mechanism for ensuring involvement of local health departments. NACCHO advisory groups (e.g., Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, HIV/Sexually Transmitted Infection Prevention, Pandemic Influenza, Immunization, Public Health Informatics, and Epidemiology workgroups) and other NACCHO representatives have contributed successfully in the past to the process of national policy and guidance development. Expanding opportunities for input from NACCHO and local health departments is important to the development and implementation of effective infectious disease control and prevention strategies at the local level.

Record of Action

Proposed by NACCHO Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Workgroup

Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors May 2007

Updated June 2010

Updated December 2016