



ERIE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH DATA

Summary:

The agency found this extremely beneficial to taking the information used to approach outbreaks from a new perspective that had not been utilized in the past.

Types of Data Sources Utilized:

- CMS Care Complete
- Outbreak Data (LTCFs) (last 5 years)
- Environmental Health Inspection Data
- Reportable Disease Data (last 5 years)



How was data used:

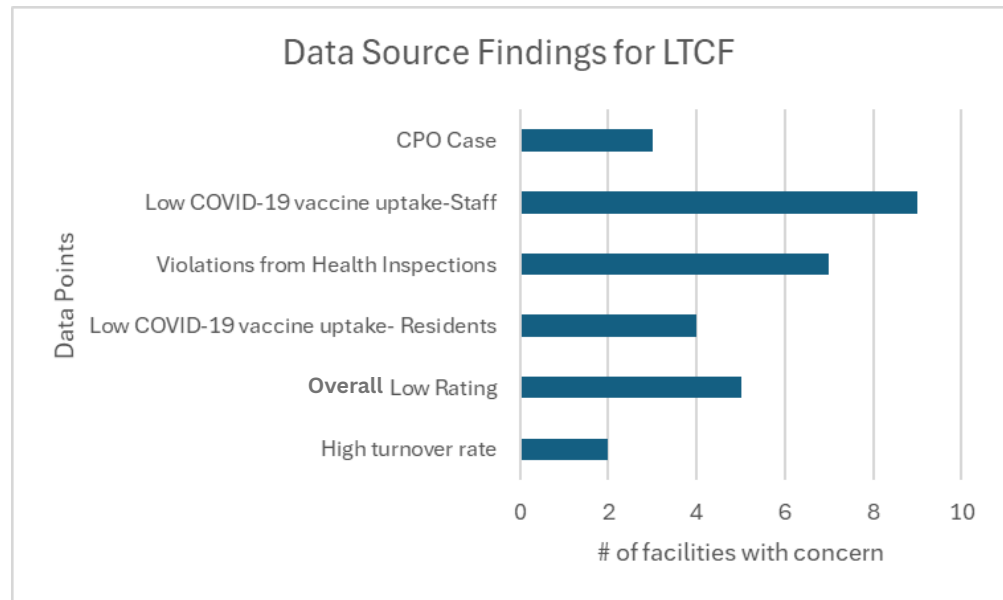
The Office of Epidemiology analyzed data from each data source to pinpoint topics of concern. These topics are listed below. The epidemiologist reviewed the analyzed data to come up with possible recommendations and opportunities for the LHD to step in and assist in addressing the concerns with each LTCF infection prevention staff.

Data Findings:

Erie County, OH has 9 long-term care facilities in its jurisdiction. ECHD decided on several crucial data points within the listed data sources to focus on regarding equity response.

The chosen data source included if the facility had a Carbapenemase-producing organism (CPO) case within the last 5 years, an overall low rating of the facility, high staff turnover rate, critical violations within their last health inspection from our registered environmental health specialists, and low COVID-19 vaccine uptake in staff and residents. Having critical data to inform decision-making made it easier to target specific facilities with interventions such as education and procurement of resources.

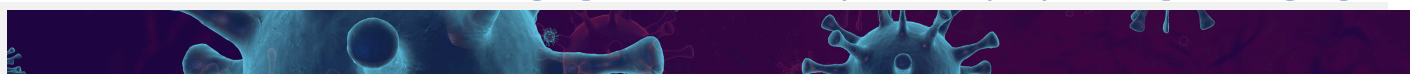
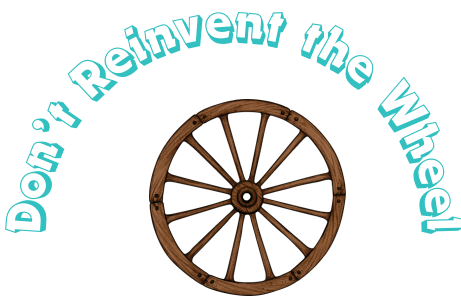
Data Source Findings for LTCF



LESSONS LEARNED FOR LHDS

Meeting with other health departments made it easy to bounce ideas off each other. The grant allowed the opportunity to connect with other LHD's during the project via the virtual community and community of practice calls. During these connections, it was found that other health departments struggle with similar issues no matter where they are located in the country. Some health departments have even tackled issues already similar to the ones that you may be having. Asking for advice has been beneficial during meetings with others so the infection preventionist/epidemiologist at their LHD doesn't feel like they need to reinvent the wheel to solve a problem.

Other health departments with similar issues may be in the same spot as you. It is helpful to talk through issues with someone in a similar position rather than tackling it alone. Relying on others in public health can be a huge resource that is underutilized due to things like competition for funds, the current state of the government, and public perception of public health. With funding being cut and less individuals working in public health, this may be our only way to solve problems going forward.





ERIE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

NACCHO-PREPARE Best Practices

BEST LESSONS LEARNED

Summary:

Prior to the grant, Erie County Health Department struggled with consistent and regular communication with all long-term care facilities in the jurisdiction. This was mainly attributed to high staff turnover rates at the facilities, specifically within the position of infection preventionists. ECHD realized they are the integral role in maintaining contact between LTCF's related to relay messaging and implement health related mitigation strategies.

Communicable Disease Reports:

ECHD produces a quarterly communicable disease report shared with local providers and clinicians. The report covers current public health topics, specimen collection best practices, vaccination guidance, and local disease trends. Recently, ECHD began including long-term care facilities in the distribution to ensure they stay informed and supported.

Infection preventionists at these facilities found this to be extremely beneficial to keep them informed of communicable disease trends outside of their facility.

Monthly Guidance:

ECHD found that providing guidance on relevant health topics has proven valuable for these facilities—covering areas such as flu vaccine recommendations, appropriate vaccine types, current reporting procedures, and more. Feedback received from the facilities included feeling supported by the LHD.

In the past, ECHD mainly communicated during like outbreaks and specific reportable diseases. This project has broadened the communication pathway in the areas of topics and initiation—creating a two-way exchange between facilities and the health department. This grant provided new ideas and provoked a new way of maintaining contact between the LHD and LTCF's.

Outreach and Engagement:

ECHD has a large mixed health department with multiple programs aimed to promoting wellness for its residents. Some of the programs specifically target older adults. After completion of our 2025 Community Health Improvement Plan, ECHD wanted to focus on the senior health initiative, which included working with our LTCFs.

ECHD sponsored a large event focused on a variety of topics in a presentation forum with clinicians, emergency preparedness, health homes, food safety and more. All long-term care facilities were given the invitation to forward onto staff, residents, and families to attend for health advice. The idea to start this process was due to the grant.

Best Practices for Staff Education and Involvement

MAKE IT FUN!

Tabletops:

The Office of Epidemiology plans to expand its tabletop training sessions to include long-term care facilities and other outside agencies. These interactive, no-fault exercises have been well-received by internal staff, offering an engaging way to build skills in areas like proper testing, vaccine guidance, PPE use, and contact tracing. ECHD planned to utilize the grant to address trained staffing challenges in the past that had led to barriers like outbreak response time. The success of these sessions with internal teams has demonstrated their value as a practical, collaborative training approach as well as provided additional trained staff with the ability to respond to outbreaks in the future.

Internal Staff Training:

The Office of Epidemiology dedicated at least an hour a week every Thursday to sit down with epidemiology staff and target a different topic listed above to go over. This was beneficial to both staff and the head epidemiologist in the comfort of performing outbreak activities if the head epidemiologist was unavailable.

Staff Training Topics:

- Ohio Infectious Disease Manual
- ECHD Epidemiological Plan and Outbreak Protocol
- Equity Framework
- Ohio Disease Reporting System

