

For Immediate Release

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Majority of Local Jurisdictions Need Improvement to Protect Communities from Mosquito-Borne Diseases, According to Study

Sustained Federal Funding Is Critical for Success

Washington, DC, October 18, 2017 — A newly released study of local jurisdictions developed by the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), revealed local jurisdictions have room to improve their mosquito-control efforts, and continued federal funding to support them is needed more than ever to safeguard the nation's health. Congress has proposed eliminating the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF), which provides funding to local jurisdictions through the CDC.

The assessment, [Mosquito Control Capabilities in the U.S.](#), was developed and distributed as an electronic survey to assess mosquito surveillance and control capacity among the nearly 2,000 local vector-control programs nationwide. It showed:

- Based on the standards for competency developed and promoted by the CDC and the American Mosquito Control Association, 84% of respondents are in need of improvement in at least one core competency area.
- Mosquito surveillance and control is not performed uniformly across the U.S. For example, the local vector control organizations assessed comprise local health departments (53%), mosquito control districts (20%), and other departments (27%) (e.g., streets and sanitation, public works, environmental health services, tribal networks, utilities, parish police juries, parks and recreation).
- The top three areas for improving mosquito surveillance and control programs in the U.S. are: (1) pesticide resistance testing, (2) treating for mosquitoes based on surveillance data, and (3) routine mosquito surveillance and species identification.

“Local health departments, working in concert with their sister agencies and partners, are the frontline defense against disease in our communities. Just in the past week, a new locally transmitted case of Zika, which is spread by mosquitos, was detected in Miami. The highly trained professionals at local health departments are ‘the boots on the ground’ protecting us from mosquito-borne disease outbreaks,” said NACCHO Executive Director and Chief of Government Affairs Laura Hanen, MPP. “But if Congress eliminates the PPHF and fails to continue to allocate vital funding to support these professionals, they will leave the American public vulnerable.”

Mosquito-borne diseases, such as West Nile virus and Zika, are an ongoing public health concern in the United States. However, there is a cyclical pattern of prioritizing mosquito control capabilities. First, a newly emerging or re-emerging mosquito-borne disease outbreak triggers a pandemic or epidemic response in which municipalities, states, and countries request resources to support and improve local mosquito control. As a result, local capacity increases as staff are hired, training expanded, diagnostic tests are developed, vaccine therapies are pursued, partnerships are established, and the threat is faced head-on. But when the seasons change, mosquito populations decrease, the sense of urgency fades, and the perceived threat lessens. Consequently, funding and resources dwindle or are withdrawn. Local vector control programs are left understaffed, undertrained, and underfunded, and the public is left vulnerable to the next impending mosquito-borne disease threat.

NACCHO’s President Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH and his staff at Harris County Public Health (HCPH), which serves Houston, are now closely monitoring the mosquito population that soared in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. “I can’t overstate the need for continued funding and resources for local health departments, so they can protect their communities from mosquito-borne diseases. From mosquito-control programs and mosquito bite prevention education to disease surveillance, health departments have a responsibility to protect the health and well-being of their communities. Our residents are fortunate, because Harris County has local resources to support a robust vector control program. What the joint NACCHO and CDC survey has brought to light is that many of our local health departments are not so fortunate and federal support for these activities is paramount.

Lives depend upon it and the health outcomes from mosquito-borne diseases, such as Zika, can be lifelong.”

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About NACCHO

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit www.naccho.org.