

HAI and AR: Opportunities for Local Health Departments in Prevention and Response

A Landscape Analysis: Fact Sheet

Introduction

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are among the leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S., a challenge further compounded by antimicrobial resistance (AR). Local health departments (LHDs) are critical in identifying outbreaks and mitigating the spread of infections in community and healthcare settings.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports LHDs in preventing and responding to HAI/AR threats. To enhance this work, NACCHO engaged WE Public Health, LLC, to conduct a landscape analysis to explore three questions:

1. What are the current LHD workforce roles and responsibilities in reducing and preventing HAI/AR?

2. What are the education and training requirements for LHD workforce engaged in HAI/AR-related work?

3. What strategies can be employed to strengthen relationships between LHDs and clinical healthcare partners?

Methods

Literature and Training Scan



- 36 journal articles, reports, and other relevant online resources (e.g., toolkits)
- 33 online trainings

LHD Document Collection



- 14 LHDs from 10 states provided 52 documents (e.g., job descriptions, HAI/AR Infection Prevention Plans, Workforce/Training Plans)

Key Informant Interviews



Eight interviews conducted.

Data Analysis



Data was coded and analyzed for common themes overall and across specific data source categories.

Findings

Job Descriptions

The most common jobs identified in the LHD HAI/AR workforce include:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Epidemiologist | 4 Infection Preventionist |
| 2 Public Health Nurse | 5 Administrator |
| 3 Disease Investigator / Specialist (DIS) | 6 Environmental Health Specialist |

LHDs Workforce Roles and Responsibilities in HAI/AR Prevention

LHDs are well-positioned to play the following roles in HAI/AR prevention and response:

- 1 Trusted partner
- 2 Subject matter expert
- 3 Convener of healthcare and local partners
- 4 Communicator across facilities to facilitate response
- 5 Provider of education and guidance
- 6 Provider of data and analysis

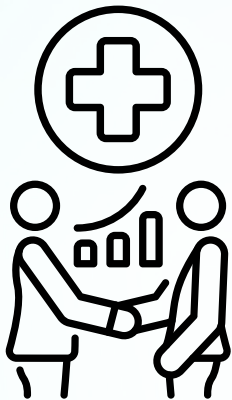
Education and Training Requirements

Training Needs

- Building and maintaining partnerships
- Providing IPC guidance and conducting provider education
- Supporting implementation of IPC practices
- Conducting Infection Control Assessments

Education and Certification

- Most jobs require:
 - A bachelor's degree
 - One year of relevant experience
- 80% of epidemiologist positions require a master's degree



Strategies to Strengthen Relationships

Partnerships are key to infection prevention and control (IPC) efforts, but are primarily described as transactional. The following are lessons shared by LHDs:

- Developing trusting relationships with community healthcare partners takes time and frequent contact.
- Clarifying roles and articulating how LHDs can support HAI activities is critical to ensure public health is not viewed as regulatory.
- Establishing effective HAI strategies occurs through shared learning.
- Implementing strategies within hierarchal healthcare systems requires developing relationships beyond established coalitions.

Opportunities and Recommendations

Opportunities to Add Value to HAI/AR Prevention and Control

LHDs can add value to overall HAI/AR prevention and response efforts by emphasizing **systems thinking** and **health equity**.

Opportunities to Strengthen Relationships with Healthcare Partners

1. Make partnership and relationship-building a core responsibility.
2. Leverage existing relationships that other LHD programs have fostered.
3. Engage staff outside of traditional IPC roles.
4. Become informed about State HAI Programs and Responsibilities

To access and view the full report, click [here](#).