

07-01

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Improving Collaboration between CDC and local health departments 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) 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, including access to sufficient resources. 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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention plays an important role in support of local health departments in many ways, including:

- Supporting local health department ability to detect and respond to infectious disease cases and outbreaks through national surveillance systems and alerts;
- Providing important evidence-based subject matter expertise for all communicable diseases and especially in the event of an outbreak of an emerging infectious disease, including onsite support through an Epi Aid; 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 and investigating cases and outbreaks of infectious diseases;
- 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, supporting local vaccination efforts and convening discussions between local stakeholders regarding community-level prevention strategies and challenges.
- Collecting data to determine community activity of infectious and communicable diseases
- Providing recommendations to local officials using data-based evidence to support systematic changes

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;
- Facilitating collaboration and sharing of best practices among local health departments, which improve capacity to prevent and control infectious diseases; and
- Making pass-through funding from CDC available to local health departments for specific projects.

CDC and NACCHO leveraged the lessons learned from collaboration with local health departments during the 2009 H1N1 to prepare for the potential emergence of avian influenza A (H7N9) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus in the United States. NACCHO supported local health departments during the surge of avian flu H5N1 in 2024. Engagement between CDC, NACCHO, and local health departments was necessary throughout the 2014-2015 and 2022 domestic responses to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, in monitoring travelers from affected countries and ensuring tiered triage of ill travelers to healthcare facilities. The need for close partnership between national and local public health can be seen in the response to the outbreaks and subsequent containment of Zika virus between 2015 and 2017. And in 2020, reliance on local health departments was demonstrated during the response to the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic. Collaboration was paramount between the CDC and local health departments to investigate cases and contacts, provide guidance to the public and high-risk facilities, and support immunization efforts. In response to the outbreak of mpox (formerly known as monkeypox), coordination between CDC and local health departments enabled effective monitoring, as well as the dissemination of information and immunizations across the country.

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 diseases 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, 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

Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors

May 2007

Updated June 2010

Updated December 2016

Updated March 2021

Updated February 2025