

10-03

STATEMENT OF POLICY

National Healthcare Safety Network

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports increased access for local health departments to National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) healthcare-associated infection (HAI) data. To facilitate access to HAI information collected by healthcare facilities, NACCHO requests that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services undertake the following:

- Modify the NHSN statement of purpose and confidentiality provisions to establish a system allowing any local health department to access HAI data from institutions within their jurisdictions.¹
- Through increased federal funding, expand technical assistance, staffing, and resources for local health departments to access and use NHSN data.
- Require healthcare facilities to disclose whether they share NHSN data with local health departments on the appropriate websites (e.g., Hospital Compare).

Justification

NACCHO recognizes CDC's leadership in establishing NHSN for HAI data collection and reporting. The use of a single surveillance system and its technical infrastructure by states that have enacted required HAI reporting fosters national standardization of HAI case criteria and data requirements. CDC is permitted to share facility-specific infection data with state health departments, regardless of mandates, through a data use agreement.² Although healthcare facilities can voluntarily share HAI data with local health departments, these processes are also labor intensive and must be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure complete reporting.

There is also a growing understanding that coordination between facilities is critical to detect, prevent, and control antibiotic resistance, which represents a growing threat to the health of the public and a significant challenge to the healthcare system. Local health departments are increasingly called to provide leadership and respond to outbreaks of antibiotic-resistant organisms and develop programs relating to antibiotic stewardship. Because hospital stays are often short and patients may return to the community on antibiotics, it is important to recognize the need for and value of actively including and supporting local health departments in having access to data.

Local health departments have a current and major role in every aspect of preventing and controlling infections, including HAIs, but their involvement is often limited by a lack of data regarding HAIs in their jurisdiction. Information sharing by healthcare providers with local health departments is a critical first step that can lead to more awareness and comprehensive HAI prevention efforts within communities and between facilities, and stronger relationships between the public health and healthcare sectors, leading to better health.³



References

¹ National Healthcare Safety Network. (2013, February 4). About NHSN: Technology. Retrieved January 17, 2014, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn/technology.html>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012, May 31). CDC Introduces New Way for State Health Departments to Access Data Reported to the National Healthcare Safety Network. Retrieved January 17, 2014, from <http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/surveillance/DUA-announcement.html>.

³ Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. Communication of Possible Healthcare-Associated Infections across Healthcare Settings 13-ID-09. Retrieved January 17, 2014, from <http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.cste.org/resource/resmgr/PS/13-ID-09.pdf>

Record of Action

Proposed by the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Workgroup

Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors

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