## **Food Safety**

#### **District of Columbia**

The Prevention Status Reports (PSRs) highlight—for all 50 states and the District of Columbia—the status of public health policies and practices designed to prevent or reduce important health problems. This report focuses on food safety and briefly describes why it is a public health concern, both for the District of Columbia and the United States as a whole. It also provides an overview of solutions (i.e., evidence-based or expert-recommended policy and practice options) for effectively monitoring food safety problems and detecting and investigating outbreaks of foodborne disease and reports the status of these solutions in the District of Columbia.

#### **PSR Framework**

The PSRs follow a simple framework:

- Describe the public health *problem* using public health data
- Identify potential *solutions* to the problem drawn from research and expert recommendations
- Report the *status* of those solutions for each state and the District of Columbia

#### **Criteria for Selection of Policies and Practices**

The policies and practices included in the PSRs were selected because they

- Can be monitored using state- or district-level data that are readily available for most states and the District of Columbia
- Meet one or more of the following criteria:
  - o Supported by systematic review(s) of scientific evidence of effectiveness (e.g., *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*)
  - o Explicitly cited in a national strategy or national action plan (e.g., Healthy People 2020)
  - o Recommended by a recognized expert body, panel, organization, study, or report with an evidence-based focus (e.g., Institute of Medicine)

#### Ratings

The PSRs use a simple, three-level rating scale to provide a practical assessment of the status of policies and practices in each state and the District of Columbia. It is important to note that the ratings reflect the *status of policies and practices* and do not reflect the *status of efforts* by the district health department, other district agencies, or other organizations to establish or strengthen those policies and practices. Strategies for improving public health vary by individual state or district needs, resources, and public health priorities.

#### **More Information**

For more information about public health activities in the District of Columbia, visit the District of Columbia Department of Health website (<a href="http://www.dchealth.dc.gov/">http://www.dchealth.dc.gov/</a>). For additional resources and to view reports for other health topics, visit the CDC website (<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/psr/">http://www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/psr/</a>).

#### **Suggested Citation**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Prevention Status Reports 2013: Food Safety—District of Columbia*. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2014.





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#### **Public Health Problem**



Diseases spread by a wide variety of contaminated foods continue to challenge the public health system. Bacteria, viruses, parasites, and chemicals can cause foodborne diseases, which can vary from mild to fatal (1). Robust surveillance for these diseases is essential for detecting outbreaks. It also provides critical information to food regulatory agencies and the food industry so that appropriate control and preventive measures can be implemented (2).



CDC estimates that each year, roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die due to foodborne diseases (3). Risk for infection and severity varies at different ages and stages of health (4).



Foodborne illness is costly. According to a 2012 study, 14 pathogens alone are estimated to cost \$14.1 billion in the United States per year. This includes medical costs (doctor visits and hospitalizations), loss due to premature death, and time lost from work (5).

## **Policy and Practice Solutions**

This report focuses on select practices recommended by the Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response on the basis of scientific evidence supporting their effectiveness in improving foodborne disease surveillance and detection activities (2). These practices include 1) increasing the speed of DNA fingerprinting using pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) testing for all reported cases of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157 and 2) increasing the completeness of PFGE testing of *Salmonella*. PFGE is a technique used to distinguish between strains of organisms at the DNA level. For information about why certain food safety-related indicators were selected, and for links to additional data and resources, visit the CDC website (<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/psr/foodsafety/">http://www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/psr/foodsafety/</a>).

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### Status of Policy and Practice Solutions in the District of Columbia

## Speed of pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) testing of reported *E. coli* **0157** cases

## Data were not available for the District of Columbia for this indicator (6).

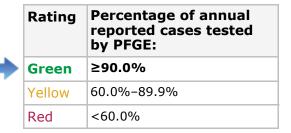
cases within four days. The CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreement established this and other national performance targets for food safety and provides federal funding to states and the District of Columbia. Performing DNA fingerprinting as quickly as possible for all Shiga toxin-producing E. coli improves detection of outbreaks. Rapid outbreak detection can help prevent additional cases and identify control and prevention measures for food regulatory agencies and the food industry (2).

Rating	Percentage of annual reported cases tested within four days:
Green	≥90.0%
Yellow	60.0%-89.9%
Red	<60.0%

### **Completeness of PFGE testing of reported** Salmonella **cases**

## In 2011, the District of Columbia tested 100% of reported *Salmonella* cases (6,7).

Research and experts in the field agree that performing DNA fingerprinting of all *Salmonella* cases would improve detection of outbreaks (2).



### Simplified Rating System

A more detailed explanation of the rating system for food safety is available at <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/psr/foodsafety/">http://www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/psr/foodsafety/</a>.

#### Green

The policy or practice is established in accordance with supporting evidence and/or expert recommendations.

#### **Yellow**

The policy or practice is established in partial accordance with supporting evidence and/or expert recommendations.

### Red

The policy or practice is either absent or not established in accordance with supporting evidence and/or expert recommendations.

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#### **Indicator Definitions**

**Speed of PFGE testing of reported** *E. coli* **O157 cases:** The annual proportion of *E. coli* O157 PFGE patterns reported to CDC (i.e., uploaded into PulseNet, the CDC-coordinated national molecular subtyping network for foodborne disease surveillance) within four working days of receiving the isolate in the state or District of Columbia public health PFGE lab.

**Completeness of PFGE testing of reported** *Salmonella* **cases:** The annual proportion of *Salmonella* cases reported to CDC's National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System with PFGE patterns uploaded into PulseNet.

#### References

- 1. Scallan E, Hoekstra RM, Angulo FJ, et al. Foodborne illness acquired in the United States—major pathogens. Emerging Infectious Diseases 2011;17:7–15.
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- 4. Lund BM, O'Brien SJ. The occurrence and prevention of foodborne disease in vulnerable people. Foodborne Pathogens and Disease 2011;8:961–73.
- 5. Hoffmann S, Batz M, Morris JG. Annual cost of illness and quality-adjusted life year losses in the United States due to 14 foodborne pathogens. Journal of Food Protection 2012;75:1292–1302.
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- 7. CDC. Final 2011 reports of nationally notifiable infectious diseases. MMWR 2012;60(32):624-37.