

Career Spotlight



CDC NERD Academy



Outbreak Team

During an outbreak investigation, public health experts work as a team. They each bring diverse backgrounds, specialized skills, and experiences that contribute to the overall goal of reducing the spread of disease.



Meet the outbreak team!

Epidemiologists

Epidemiologists collect and use data to identify when an outbreak is occurring. They use descriptive epidemiology to determine how disease is spreading during an outbreak by person, place, and time. They also use statistics to determine the outbreak source.

Infection prevention specialists

Infection prevention specialists use outbreak information, data, and findings to design procedures and protocols to reduce the spread of disease and prevent future outbreaks.

Behavioral scientists

Behavioral scientists look at how people live, work, learn, pray, and play in a community. They use this information to help identify how disease spreads during an outbreak and how to design programs and strategies that can help change behaviors to reduce risk and prevent future outbreaks.

Biostatisticians

Biostatisticians use math and statistics to analyze outbreak data and identify patterns and trends. Biostatisticians also calculate measures of associations between an exposure and disease to help determine the outbreak source.

Health communication specialists

Health communication specialists communicate outbreak information, data, and findings to different audiences in a way each audience can understand. They design communication strategies and materials to increase awareness of and promote actions to reduce or prevent further disease.

Laboratory scientists

Laboratory scientists verify diagnoses by conducting laboratory testing, such as testing for the presence of an infectious agent in a sample (e.g., nasal swab). This information is used to confirm cases, determine the cause of disease (e.g., an infectious agent), and can help determine the outbreak source.

Public health nurses

Public health nurses help collect data through contact tracing, collect samples for laboratory testing, distribute health communication materials, and provide support to people who were exposed or had a case of disease throughout the outbreak.

