

Public Health Practice Stories from the Field



Two Local Health Departments Tackle Healthcare-Associated Infections

NACCHO Works with Local Health Departments
to Promote Patient Safety

Raised

awareness about prevention of HAIs

Identified and funded

two local health departments to
participate in a six-month HAI
prevention project

Conducted

- a hand-washing campaign that highlighted HAI-prevention measures
- a needs assessment among 11 long-term care facilities

Worked

with NACCHO to summarize lessons
learned and share resources with
health departments nationwide

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are caused by a wide variety of common but unusual bacteria, fungi, and viruses that patients can be exposed to when receiving medical care. These infections are a serious threat to patient safety: approximately one in 20 hospitalized patients falls victim to an HAI, leading to nearly 100,000 deaths per year. HAIs affect patients, healthcare personnel, and surrounding communities and cost the United States \$28.3 billion annually.

Such infections were long accepted by clinicians as an inevitable hazard of hospitalization. However, relatively simple measures can prevent the majority of common HAIs, and as a result, hospitals and other healthcare providers are under intense pressure to reduce the burden of these infections.

Preventing HAIs is considered a “winnable battle” by CDC. Effective educational campaigns and resources can help reduce the risk of acquiring and spreading HAIs. While the responsibility of the public health sector in preventing and reducing HAIs is apparent, the related role of local health departments has remained unclear and limited. For this reason, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is working with local health departments to explore current and potential roles for local health agencies in protecting patients from HAIs.

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Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support



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What We Did

In 2012, NACCHO funded the DuPage County Health Department in Illinois and the Livingston County Department of Public Health in Michigan to participate in a HAI prevention project, building on these local agencies' experience in addressing HAIs. Through this effort, both health departments

- Partnered with their state HAI coordinators to gain expertise and access available resources
- Connected with local health departments that had experienced HAI outbreaks and learned first-hand about community impact and prevention efforts
- Attended the pre-conference HAI workshop at the 2012 Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists Annual Conference
- Met with local healthcare partners and other stakeholders to share information and learn about local needs related to HAI prevention

What We Accomplished

Through this demonstration project

- Two DuPage County Health Department staff earned certification in health infection control
- Livingston County developed the "Michigan Hands Are Clean Coalition" and created educational print materials for distribution to the public and community healthcare providers
- DuPage County conducted a needs assessment in 11 long-term care facilities and shared results at a meeting with local hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other stakeholders to advance collaboration on this important health issue
- Both agencies learned that there are opportunities and roles for local health departments to share HAI prevention messages and information with the community
- Both agencies contributed to a forthcoming NACCHO summary of lessons learned, including information about the Michigan hand-washing campaign and the DuPage County needs assessment, that can be used by local health departments nationwide to enhance their HAI prevention efforts

To access demonstration project summaries and other resources, health departments can visit NACCHO's infectious disease prevention and control site at www.naccho.org or contact NACCHO at infectiousdiseases@naccho.org.

For more stories, visit

www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/phpracticestories

For information about this story, contact

NACCHO

Lilly Kan, MPH

Senior Analyst, Community Health

Telephone: 202-507-4238

Email: lkan@naccho.org

For information about this product, contact

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333

OSTLTS Toll-free Helpdesk: 866-835-1861

Email: OSTLTSfeedback@cdc.gov

Web: www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth