

Assessment of Local Health Department Data Use for Outbreak Response in Healthcare Settings

Executive Summary



Overview

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion, supports local health departments (LHDs) in enhancing their infection prevention and control (IPC) activities. This support involves building the capacity of LHDs to respond to outbreaks at healthcare facilities, including those related to healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and emerging infectious diseases. NACCHO aims to develop and strengthen relationships between LHDs, healthcare facilities, and public health partners; improve implementation of IPC in high-risk facilities; and reduce rates of, and negative outcomes associated with, COVID-19, HAIs, and antimicrobial-resistant pathogens in those facilities.

NACCHO's goals for this evaluation were the following:



Assess LHD **awareness** of data, including infection and health equity data, for preventing and responding to outbreaks in healthcare facilities.



Assess LHD **access** to data, including infection and health equity data, for preventing and responding to outbreaks in healthcare facilities.



Assess LHD **use** of data, including infection and health equity data, for preventing and responding to outbreaks in healthcare facilities.



Provide recommendations for how NACCHO can support LHDs to increase their use of infection and health equity data when responding to HAI outbreaks.

Methods

Through August and September 2023, the Population Health Innovation Lab (PHIL) evaluators gathered data through interviews and focus groups from LHDs across the U.S.



13 individuals representing **11 LHDs** participated.



Key themes and insights identified using **thematic analysis**.



Results

While LHDs made significant progress in strengthening outbreak response during the COVID-19 pandemic, there remains a need to improve their access to reporting and surveillance systems, enhance training opportunities, and increase capacity to centralize equity in outbreak strategies. Future endeavors to strengthen overall LHD response efforts should prioritize improving the capacity of smaller LHDs and embedding equity in outbreak response.

This evaluation yielded the following lessons for NACCHO:



Strengthen Partnerships

NACCHO can support regular forums or meetings among LHDs, state health departments, local partners, and healthcare facilities to leverage collective capabilities, insights, and resources towards synergized outbreak responses.



Expand LHD Capacity

NACCHO can find ways to support LHDs in accessing essential resources, e.g., funding, technology, and expertise, especially to enhance personnel capacity for smaller LHDs.



Support Improvement of State-Level Disease Surveillance Systems

NACCHO and partners can encourage state departments of health (DOH) to regularly review and update end user training materials to improve the user experience of their electronic disease surveillance and reporting systems.

NACCHO can also organize a repository for states' point of contact, such that LHDs, specifically those that are smaller or rural, can inquire about guidance, resources, facilitations, or training.



Address Access Barriers

State DOHs should implement processes to simplify and expedite processes to access essential data portals and systems to facilitate smoother operational workflows and strengthen outbreak response mechanisms.



Facilitate Training

NACCHO can facilitate diverse trainings for LHDs and supplement them with resources to support learning and application of acquired skills in outbreak responses.



Emphasize Equity

NACCHO can support LHDs in leveraging data to develop equity-driven interventions that provide at-risk populations with appropriate resources and care during healthcare outbreaks.