STATE OF WISCONSIN
Department of Health Services
Division of Public Health

1 West Wilson Street
PO Box 2659
Madison WI 53701-2659

Telephone: 608-267-9003
Fax: 608-261-4976
TTY: 888-701-1253

Date: April 17, 2019 BCD-2019-07

To: Wisconsin Healthcare Administrators, Providers, and Infection Preventionists

From: Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Healthcare-Associated Infections Prevention Program, and Division of Quality Assurance

Infection Prevention Breach Notification and Support

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Over the past year, seven breaches related to sterilization and disinfection processes were reported to the Wisconsin Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) Prevention Program (WHAIPP) across multiple health care settings. These infection prevention and control lapses occurred when there were deviations from best practice, resulting in possible infectious disease transmission to patients and staff. Improper reprocessing of medical equipment can have devastating effects on patients. Audits of reprocessing practices identified lapses at each stage of the process.

The Department of Health Services reminds health care providers that infection control breaches with the potential to expose patients to blood or bodily fluids may result in citations and other enforcement remedies when identified by the Division of Quality Assurance (DQA) while conducting federal initial and recertification surveys. As indicated in Centers for Medicare & Medicaid guidance released on October 28, 2016, DQA will also refer facilities with infection prevention breaches to the WHAIPP for consultation, education, and re-training. Common reprocessing breaches referred to WHAIPP include:

- Inappropriate reprocessing (e.g., cleaning, disinfection, and/or sterilization) of reusable medical equipment and devices, such as glucometers, endoscopes, and surgical instruments.
- Inappropriate use and monitoring of on-site equipment sterilization and disinfection (e.g., failure to follow best practices for sterilizer usage, spore testing, chemical indicators, instrument packaging, load documentation, and storage).

The WHAIPP is available to assist facilities that identify infection control-related breaches, with or without referral from DQA. WHAIPP services include providing scientific and technical advice during investigations, conducting risk assessments, consulting with clinical staff, and authorizing additional testing through the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. Facilities are encouraged to seek this collaborative guidance when needed to minimize patient risk and reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

For questions, please contact the WHAIPP at dhswihaipreventionprogram@dhs.wi.gov or 608-267-7711.