



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES

Infection Preventionist Lunch and Learn

Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Ashley O'Keefe, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}, CIC, CDIPC

Series Objectives

- Encourage learning, growth, and networking
- Provide non-regulatory education and information
- Discuss topics relevant to new infection preventionists (IPs)

Today's Discussion

- Define outbreaks.
- Describe outbreak preparedness measures.
- Describe outbreak response measures.
- Work through two short outbreak scenarios!

What is an Outbreak?

- An outbreak is a sudden rise in the number of cases of a disease that is over the expected occurrence.
- There are different scenarios, including:
 - Many cases caused by the same infectious agent.
 - A single case of a very unusual disease.

Preparing for Outbreaks

Surveillance



- Recognize potentially infectious patients early.
- Maintain infection logs with thorough documentation.

Planning



- Conduct risk assessments and update infection prevention and control plan.
- Develop an outbreak management team.
- Encourage vaccination.
- Stockpile essential supplies.

Planning



- Establish communication channels.
- Audit infection prevention and control practices.
- Provide staff education and training.
- Stay up to date with public health information.

Responding to Outbreaks

Steps for Facilities to Take

- ✓ Initiate containment strategies.
- ✓ Inform public health partners.
- ✓ Implement control measures.
- ✓ Create a case definition and maintain logs of those who meet the definition.
- ✓ Post signage at entrances.
- ✓ Assess effectiveness of strategies and measures and adjust as needed!

Scenario 1: Respiratory Outbreak in a Long-Term Care Facility

Details

- **September 24**, resident in room 204 develops respiratory symptoms.
- **September 25**, two staff members that float all four wings of the facility call out sick due to respiratory symptoms.
- **September 26**, resident in room 412 develops respiratory symptoms.
- It was determined that three staff members worked with mild respiratory symptoms on **September 23**.

What Do You Think?

- Does this meet the definition of a respiratory outbreak?
- What type of isolation precautions, if any should be initiated? When?
- Should public health be notified?
- What next steps should be taken?
- What could go better next time?

Scenario 2: Gastrointestinal (GI) Outbreak in a Hospital

Details

- **September 23**, staff nurse on 200 wing leaves work early due to GI symptoms.
- **September 24**, patient in room 204 develops GI symptoms.
- **September 24**, patient in room 206 develops GI symptoms.
- **September 25**, patients in room 208 and 201 develop GI symptoms.

What Do You Think?

- Does this meet the definition of a GI outbreak?
- What type of isolation precautions, if any should be initiated?
- Should public health be notified?

Details

A stool specimen is collected from the patient in room 204 on September 25. Results show Norovirus and patient is placed on contact precautions on September 25.

What Do You Think?

- Were transmission-based precautions implemented appropriately?
- What other infection prevention interventions could be helpful?
- Is there a connection between the ill staff member and patients?
- What could be done better in the future?

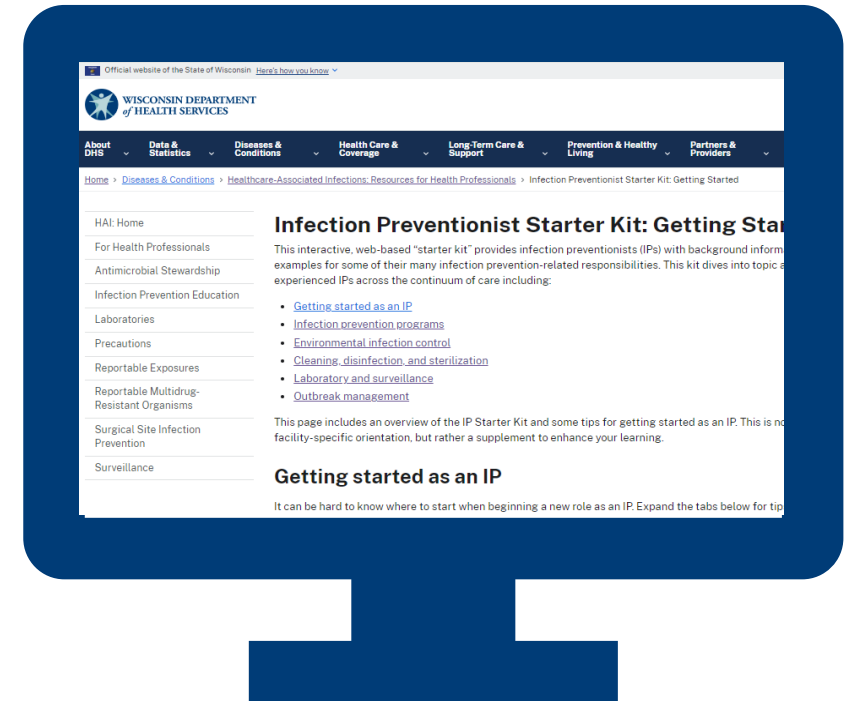
Recap

Recap

- Prepare for outbreaks before they occur.
- Form and maintain relationships with local and state public health partners.
- When an outbreak is suspected, contact local or tribal public health right away.

IP Starter Kit

- Interactive, web-based [resource](#)
- Background information, resources, and templates
- Covers topics applicable to IPs across care settings



Resources

- [Hand hygiene Observation Tracking Workbook](#)
- [Infection Surveillance Log for Long Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Preventing Respiratory Outbreaks](#)
- [Recommendations for Prevention and Control of GI Outbreaks in Long Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Measles readiness toolkit](#)

HAI Prevention Program Contacts



Email: dhswhaipreventionprogram@dhs.wisconsin.gov



Phone: 608-267-7711



Website: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hai/contacts.htm

Send your questions and topic suggestions.

Submit your ideas to Ashley O'Keefe at
ashley.okeefe@dhs.wisconsin.gov.

Upcoming Lunch and Learn Session

Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2026

Topic: Handling Health Care Laundry