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Bulletin No. 29 December 27, 2013

Overview of New Public Health Reporting Regulations, Effective December 29, 2013

Background

In May 2013, the Alaska Division of Public Health's Sections of Epidemiology (SOE) and Laboratories (SOL) drafted proposed regulations to update Alaska's health care reporting requirements. The draft regulations were revised based on feedback received during the public comment period and legal review. The final regulations were signed by the Lieutenant Governor on November 29, 2013, and become effective 30 days later (on December 29).¹ This *Bulletin* provides an overview of the new regulations.

Conditions Reportable to Public Health

To align with national standards and to address Alaska-specific public health surveillance needs, the following conditions were either modified or newly added to the lists of conditions reportable to SOE by health care providers and laboratories (7 AAC 27.005 and 7 AAC 27.007):

- amnesic shellfish (domoic acid) intoxication;
- an outbreak or unusual number or clustering of diseases or other conditions of public health importance;
- antibiotic-resistant organisms of national significance, including vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* and carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae;
- arboviral neuroinvasive and nonneuroinvasive disease, including West Nile virus infection;
- ciguatera fish poisoning;
- diphyllbothriasis;
- glanders;
- hantavirus pulmonary syndrome;
- hemolytic uremic syndrome;
- human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection;
- influenza death, laboratory-confirmed by any testing methodology;
- leprosy (Hansen's disease);
- leptospirosis;
- melioidosis;
- pregnancy in a person known to be infected with hepatitis B, HIV, or syphilis;
- rabies in a human or an animal;
- scombroid fish poisoning; and
- Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* infection, including O157:H7.

Submission of Bacterial Isolates or Clinical Specimens

As part of the reporting requirements for laboratories, isolates of certain reportable pathogens or aliquots of original specimen material must be submitted to the Alaska State Public Health Laboratory in Anchorage. This requirement was added to enable molecular characterization of organisms, which assists in performing epidemiologic investigations (7 AAC 27.007(e)).

Tuberculosis Screening of School Children

The regulations that describe assessing the tuberculosis status of school children were revised to broaden the methods of assessment and acknowledge the development of newer blood tests that indicate infection with the tuberculosis bacterium (7 AAC 27.213).

Access to Healthcare-Associated Infections Data

A regulation was added to allow SOE access to healthcare-associated infections (HAI) data that are collected by hospitals and submitted to federal agencies through the National Healthcare Safety Network (7 AAC 27.019).

Use of the Immunization Information System

Reporting of vaccine administration data to VacTrAK, the Alaska Immunization Information System, is now required for all health care providers offering immunization services (7 AAC 27.650). Additionally, a provision was added to clarify

the circumstances under which the Immunization Program could release data (7 AAC 27.655).

Toxic or Hazardous Exposures

A new section was added to expand the data elements and circumstances that require the reporting of toxic or hazardous exposures (7 AAC 27.018); this reporting requirement was previously contained within 7 AAC 27.005(d). Laboratories are now required to report all heavy metal analysis results for arsenic, cadmium, cobalt, and mercury within 4 weeks of receiving results. The Section also requires that health care providers report conditions that may have resulted from acute exposure to an environmental contaminant, including a spill, leak, or explosion that involves acid, solvents, pesticides, methamphetamine production chemicals, paint, heavy metals, methane, hydrogen sulfide, formaldehyde, benzene, or other toxic or hazardous substances.

Occupational Disease and Injury

Changes in the reporting requirements regarding occupational disease and injury were made to designate the range of conditions and the data elements to be reported, and to clarify the definition of a "work activity" (7 AAC 27.017).

Permitted Disclosures

Two additional circumstances were added to the list of permitted disclosures (7 AAC 27.893). One relates to the sharing of data between governmental agencies for the purposes of HIV prevention and care (27.893(b)(7)). The other relates to releasing selected immunization data to a third party payor about a currently enrolled member of that payor's health plan (27.893(b)(8)).

Firearm Injuries

Although the requirements for reporting firearm injuries to SOE did not substantively change, the data elements to be submitted on the report form were more explicitly defined (7 AAC 27.013). The current report form is available on-line at: <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions/frmFirearms.pdf>

Blood Lead Test Results

The provisions that address the reporting of blood lead test results were re-written to more specifically describe the data elements to be submitted and to incorporate a change in the national level of concern for children (7 AAC 27.015). The Section now requires reporting of all blood lead levels for children and adults. Reporting of levels above 5 µg/dL in children aged <18 years and levels above 10 µg/dL for adults ≥18 years of age is required *within 1 week* of receiving the result. All other levels are required within 4 weeks of receiving the result.

For More Information

An updated version of the *Conditions Reportable to Public Health* manual is forthcoming.² For more information, please contact the Section of Epidemiology at 907-269-8000, the Section of Laboratories at 907-334-2100, or refer to the following on-line resources:

- Report Forms: <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions/crForms.htm>
- Laboratory Test Directory: <http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Labs/Documents/LaboratoryTests.pdf>
- VacTrAK Information: <https://vactrak.alaska.gov/iweb/>

References

1. State of Alaska Online Public Notices. Health Care Reporting Requirements. Effective 12/29/2013. Available at: <http://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=170430>
2. Alaska Section of Epidemiology. Conditions Reportable to Public Health. Jan. 2008. Available at: <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions/default.stm>