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Updated Public Health Reporting Requirements

Background

In March 2018, the Alaska Division of Public Health (DPH) offered proposed regulations for public comment to update Alaska's health care reporting requirements.¹ The draft regulations were revised based on feedback received during the public comment period and legal review.² The final regulations were signed by the Lieutenant Governor on October 31, 2018, and will become effective on November 30, 2018.³ The purpose of this *Bulletin* is to present an overview of the new reporting rules and make sure that health care providers and clinical laboratory staff are aware of the changes.

Timeframe for Reporting Infectious Diseases

Prior to this regulation update, there were two time-based categories for reporting infectious diseases of public health importance: a) immediate, and b) within 5 days. Diseases that fall under the immediate reporting category are considered public health emergencies (e.g., botulism, measles, meningococcal invasive disease, and rabies) that require urgent action to limit disease transmission and prevent serious adverse health outcomes. No changes were made to this reporting category. A change was made, however, to the reporting interval for the second category to facilitate timelier responses to other reportable infectious diseases that are not considered public health emergencies but still require prompt public health interventions. Therefore, the revised regulations reduced the required reporting interval of these diseases from 5 working days to 2 working days for both health care providers and laboratories (see 7 AAC 27.005[b] and 7 AAC 27.007[b], respectively).

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Laboratory Results

The list of laboratory tests indicating or confirming the HIV status of a patient was expanded to include all preliminary positive screening results and related confirmatory results (whether positive or negative), as well as nucleotide sequence data associated with genotyping results. This change reflects the increase in testing assays available to characterize HIV disease status (see 7 AAC 27.007[b][20]).

Alaska Birth Defects Registry

Reporting provisions outlined in 7 AAC 27.012 were repealed and readopted to improve detection of defects and align surveillance activities with national standards. This updated regulation expands the list of organizations required to report and includes private or public health insurance organizations and diagnostic laboratories operating in Alaska.

Reporting includes all major structural defects, genetic disorders, disorders resulting from prenatal exposure to alcohol or other substances, neuromuscular defects, cardiac defects, and all other minor birth defects specified in the defect registry reporting guide based on the ICD-10-CM.⁴ Reporting is now restricted to children aged <3 years at the time of service, down from 6 years old. Infant/child and maternal identifiers (names and dates of birth) and agency national provider identifiers are required. Reporting frequency was reduced from within 3 months of the date of service to semiannual reporting. Finally, provisions are specified to facilitate medical records review and abstraction for confirmation of diagnosis.

These changes will help improve the detection of birth defects in Alaska, improve timeliness and validity in estimating prevalence, and reduce reporting burden on providers (see 7 AAC 27.012).

Blood Lead Test Results

The provisions that address the reporting of blood lead test results were repealed and readopted to clarify the data elements to be submitted (i.e., name, date of birth, sex, race, ethnicity, residence, test result, test date, and type of test), to incorporate a change in the national reference level of ≥ 5 micrograms per deciliter for anyone (no longer only children), to specifically include test results that come from in-clinic point-of-care laboratory instruments, and to include the type of blood sample tested (i.e., capillary or venous; see 7 AAC 27.014). As in prior regulations, all blood lead level tests in Alaska are reportable.

In March 2017, DPH updated the state policy for blood lead testing to recommend testing of all Medicaid-eligible children aged 12 and 24 months (or <72 months if not previously tested), to conform with Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment guidelines.⁵ All other children aged <18 years, particularly those aged <72 months, should be assessed for lead risk factors and tested if they have a risk factor. A lead exposure tool is available on the Environmental Public Health Program website.⁶

Contact the Section of Epidemiology to request educational resources on lead exposure, prevention, and testing. More information is available at:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/epi/eph/pages/lead/leadfree.aspx>.

For More Information

An updated electronic version of the *Conditions Reportable to Public Health* manual is forthcoming.⁷ For more information, please contact the Section of Epidemiology at 907-269-8000, the Section of Laboratories at 907-334-2100, the Section of Women's, Children's, and Family Health at 907-269-3400, or refer to the following on-line resources:

- *Infectious Disease Report Forms:*
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/Pages/pubs/conditions/crforms.aspx>
- *Laboratory Test Directory:*
<http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Labs/Documents/LaboratoryTests.pdf>
- *Alaska Birth Defects Registry:*
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Pages/mchepi/abdr/default.aspx>

References

1. State of Alaska Online Public Notices. Notice of Proposed Changes – Reportable Conditions Update. Posted 3/26/2018. Available at: <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=189339>
2. State of Alaska Online Public Notices. Notice of Public comments Synopsis – Reportable Conditions Update. Posted 6/27/2018. Available at: <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=190559>
3. State of Alaska Online Public Notices. Alaska Administrative Code – Title 7 – Department of Health and Social Services update to reportable conditions regulations. Posted 10/31/2018. Available at: <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=191966>
4. Alaska Section of Women's Children's, and Family Health. Alaska Birth Defect Registry Reporting Guide version 2.1 (Updated October 2018). Available at: http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Documents/mchepi/abdr/ABDR_Reporting_Guide_post_OCT2018_v2.1.pdf
5. Alaska Epidemiology *Bulletin*. "Updated Policies on Blood Lead Screening for Medicaid-Eligible Children." No. 6, March 15, 2017. Available at: http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2017_06.pdf
6. Alaska Environmental Public Health Program website. Available at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/epi/eph/Pages/lead/default.aspx>
7. Alaska Section of Epidemiology. Conditions Reportable to Public Health. Available at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/Pages/pubs/conditions/default.aspx>