

State Foodborne Illness Surveillance and Response Laws: Compilation and Analysis

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Objective

To document and assess the variation in state legislation relating to foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response for all 50 states and the District of Columbia by creating a database and appendix of laws and regulations that will be made available to researchers and policymakers.

Introduction

Foodborne illnesses sicken 48 million and kill 3,000 Americans every year, presenting an enduring threat to the public's health. In just the past three years alone, the United States has experienced at least four major multistate outbreaks in food. Despite this growing problem, efforts to prevent foodborne illness pose a particular public health challenge due in part to the widely variable laws governing foodborne illness surveillance and outbreak response. The recent passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) presents an opportunity for researchers, program managers, and policy makers to assess and correct the legal barriers that may hinder states in effectively implementing the FSMA's vision with regard to increased state and local capacity for surveillance and outbreak response.

Methods

We conducted a systematic review and analysis of laws and regulations relating to foodborne illness surveillance and outbreak response in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, using the following methods: (1) we created a database to record state laws and

regulations relating to foodborne illness surveillance and outbreak response in all 50 states and the District of Columbia; (2) we conducted a basic gap analysis of state foodborne illness surveillance and outbreak response laws and policies collected in the database; and (3) we conducted case study analyses of previous multistate outbreaks from 2008-2011.

Results

Through compilation of the state foodborne illness surveillance and outbreak response laws and regulations and analysis of previous multistate outbreaks, we are able to present trends, variations, and gaps in the legislation that directly impacts the ability of public health officials to conduct foodborne outbreak investigations. We also present policy recommendations for strengthening state laws and regulations.

Keywords

Surveillance; Foodborne disease; Outbreak response; Public health law; Legal preparedness

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