

Tab 5 – Communicable Disease Surveillance

Background

Infectious and communicable diseases are those that transmit infections and can spread from person-to-person through direct or indirect contact.

Surveillance for infectious and communicable diseases involves collecting and interpreting health-related information that helps to identify when there is an infectious or communicable disease spreading among your staff and/or residents/participants.

Insights from surveillance can prompt additional actions to prevent or stop the spread.

Purpose

The surveillance tool included is provided as an *option* for providers to utilize when collecting and organizing data related to infectious and communicable diseases within the work setting. This tool has been designed to be used either electronically (saved on a computer) or manually (printed and completed by hand).

Using a surveillance tool can help make it easier to recognize when experiencing clusters (or groups) of people with similar symptoms or diagnoses. It can also help identify when a provider may need additional assistance and/or provide notifications/reports to the appropriate licensing representative at the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) or the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).

Using a surveillance system or tool also helps collect and organize most of the health-related information needed by VDH when making a report of reportable disease or suspected or confirmed outbreaks.

Surveillance can also help track patterns of illness over time. For example, with this tool, the provider can build a record of how many residents/participants or staff tend to get sick with similar symptoms during a specific month or time of year in order to anticipate when it may be time to start implementing extra infection prevention measures.

Surveillance and reporting communicable disease outbreaks and other reportable diseases are a regulatory requirement in both Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs) and Adult Day Care Centers (ADCCs). Using a systematic tool, like the one included, can assist in maintaining compliance with these requirements.

Trainer's Guide

For many providers, formal communicable disease surveillance using a tool like the one included in this binder may be unfamiliar. You may find it beneficial to use the surveillance tool all the time, even when levels of infectious and communicable disease are low in your setting. This will help the process of surveillance to become part of your everyday routine, which will lead to the process feeling easy and familiar.

If you will not be using the surveillance tool all the time, we recommend using the surveillance tool any time that your facility has a staff or resident with two or more symptoms or any person with a fever.

There's no obligation to use the included tool, but it is important to find and consistently use a system for surveillance that is going to work for your setting and staffing.

An editable, electronic version of the included tracking tool and the user guide can be downloaded from the HQIN website at <https://hqin.org/resource/surveillance-tracking-tool/>