

POLICY NUMBER: 222.39  
DIVISION: Environmental Public Health  
POLICY TITLE: Foodborne Illness Complaint Investigations  
AGENCY(ies): Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department  
AUTHORITY: Board of Health  
DRAFTED: 09-22-09  
APPROVED: 10-13-09  
REVISED: 12-18-15  
APPROVED:

#### POLICY STATEMENT:

Each foodborne illness/outbreak complaint will be considered priority and investigated by the Food Safety Program within 24 hours. All complaints pertaining to a food or food establishment will be kept in a LLCHD digital record management system. Documentation of the complaint investigation shall be complete and accurate.

Foodborne illness shall be defined as any disease caused by ingestion of contaminated food. Foodborne outbreak shall be defined as the occurrence of two or more cases of a similar illness resulting from the ingestion of a common food, or single cases of certain rare and serious conditions, such as gastrointestinal anthrax, botulism, or cholera.

A Registered Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) in the Food Safety Program shall be designated as the Lead Environmental Health Investigator.

#### PROCEDURE:

- I. Receiving a Complaint. All foodborne illness complaints received by the food safety program will be processed as follows:
  - A. ~~Any EHS will thoroughly complete the Foodborne, Waterborne, Enteric Illness Report form (Exhibit 1). The Lead Environmental Health Investigator shall receive all foodborne illness complaints, conduct the interview, and thoroughly complete the Foodborne, Waterborne, and Enteric Illness Report form (Exhibit 1). The Senior Office Assistant EHS shall initialize a complaint in Permits Plus Accela Automation assigning the case to the Lead Environmental Health Investigator, or in their absence, the complaint shall be assigned EHS that inspects the establishment associated with the complaint. and a~~ All information shall be documented in ~~Permit Plus Accela Automation~~ and/or scanned into the complaint case.
  - B. When an EHS is not available, the office assistant taking the call will gather contact information, the nature of the complaint, and initialize a complaint in ~~Permits Plus Accela Automation~~. An EHS, Environmental Health Supervisor, or Division Manager will be given the information as soon as possible. The EHS investigating the complaint will contact the complainant for more information.

- C. The complainant information shall be documented into [Permits Plus Accela Automation](#) and is automatically forwarded to the assigned EHS via e-mail.
- II. ~~The Lead Environmental Health Investigator shall log into Crystal Reports at least weekly and run report FBI001 to review the foodborne illness complaint reports taken within the last 90 days.~~ The Lead Environmental Investigator is responsible for identifying trends, multiple complaints at the same or related establishments, or implicated foods. This information will be shared ~~electronically~~ with the Food Safety Team [each month at the Food Team Meeting](#), and [with](#) the LLCHD Communicable Disease Program [as needed](#).
- III. The EHS shall perform an environmental health investigation of the implicated food or food establishment(s) in a time appropriate response to the type or severity of the illness, but in no case more than 24 hours. An environmental health investigation is a systematic, detailed, science-based evaluation of environmental factors that contributed to transmission of a particular disease in an outbreak.
- A. Upon identification of the person in charge, the EHS will emphasize that the purpose of the investigation is to determine events or activities that may have contributed to an illness/outbreak of a foodborne disease so that measures can be taken to prevent reoccurrence.
- B. An on-site investigation shall include the observance of potential sources that may be responsible for a foodborne illness. The goals of an environmental health investigation are to identify:
1. possible points of contamination of the implicated food with the disease agent,
  2. whether the causative agent could have survived (or, in the case of a toxin, not been inactivated),
  3. whether conditions were conducive for subsequent growth or toxin production by the disease agent, and
  4. antecedents that resulted in the conditions allowing the outbreak to happen.
- C. Responsibilities of the EHS investigating the complaint may include any or all of the following:
1. investigates food-preparation sites, including sites involved with growing, raising, processing, manufacturing, packaging, storing, and preparing food;
  2. collects environmental and food samples;
  3. reports results;
  4. arranges for testing of samples;
  5. coordinates food sampling, management and testing procedures with the NDOA;
  6. interviews food workers and managers;
  7. reviews food-preparation and food-handling records;
  8. reviews food inventory and distribution records, food flow, and contributing factors;

9. consults with epidemiologic and laboratory investigators; and/or
10. assist Communicable Disease to interview cases and conduct traceback investigations.

D. Any needed enforcement action will be taken per Policy 222.31- Food Establishment Enforcement.

E. Investigation findings shall be documented in an InspecTab report or on an Environmental Public Health Inspection Report “short form.” The investigation reports shall be downloaded or scanned into the establishment’s ~~digital file~~ Accela Automation file.

F. When the investigation is complete, comments shall be entered into the ~~Permits Plus~~ Accela Automation complaint file by ~~selecting the “inspection” button located in the complaint toolbar proceeding through the “Workflow” tab. The “Intake” tab will be selected, and any relevant comments concerning the complaint shall be entered and saved. Prior to closing the complaint, the complaint must be classified as substantiated or not substantiated. Under the “ASI” tab, the complaint “Allegation Found” shall be completed as substantiated or not by selecting “Yes” or “No”. The Accela Automation will not close a complaint until this is completed. When the case is completed, the status in “Workflow” shall be moved to “Closed”.~~

~~If the complaint is substantiated, the complaint shall be checked found. The complaint shall be closed in Permits Plus and related to the establishment’s digital file.~~

IV. Outbreak Response. When 2 or more individuals report illness from the same establishment or food source, or single cases of certain rare and serious conditions, such as gastrointestinal anthrax, botulism, or cholera, the Food Safety Team shall discuss the complaint information and an outbreak investigation shall be considered.

A. An Epi Team meeting may be called following Policy 700.01- Epidemiologic (Epi) Team to review information collected by the Communicable Disease Section and the Food Safety Program. Upon reviewing the information, the Epi Team will determine what actions will be taken.

B. Information gathered from the investigation may be shared with any appropriate regulatory authority such as the Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and/or any other associated local/tribal health department(s).

C. A summary report of the Food Safety Program activities related to a specific outbreak will be prepared by the Lead Environmental Health Investigator. This report will be provided to the Communicable Disease Section as part of a complete report provided to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

## LLCHD Foodborne, Waterborne, Enteric Illness Report

**Accela Automation Record Number:**

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Reported by: \_\_\_\_\_ relationship to case (parent, spouse etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Place of Employment/School/Volunteer work:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Food Handler? Yes No      Child Care Provider? Yes No      Health Care Provider? Yes No

Date suspect meal was consumed    /    /      Time      AM PM

Establishment name and location of suspect meal: \_\_\_\_\_

All food and beverages consumed at that location:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were others in case's dining party also ill? Yes No    List names and contact information (if known) below:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Symptoms** (circle all that apply)    **Onset Time** (AM/PM)    **Other Symptoms Noted:** \_\_\_\_\_

Nausea \_\_\_\_\_

General diarrhea \_\_\_\_\_

Bloody diarrhea \_\_\_\_\_

Abdominal Cramps \_\_\_\_\_

Vomiting \_\_\_\_\_

Headache \_\_\_\_\_

Fever \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the case currently symptomatic? Yes No      Medical care provided? Yes No

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Other household members ill? Yes No      Common meal(s) consumed with case? Yes No  
(If yes- list name and relationship to case below)      (Other ill parties only)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Accela Automation Record Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Establishment Information**

Establishment Name \_\_\_\_\_

Establishment Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Establishment PIC \_\_\_\_\_

Recently Ill Food Handlers?  Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
If Yes:  
Employee Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Excluded \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Returned \_\_\_\_\_

Other Recent FBI Complaints to Establishment?  Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments: