**Surry County Health & Nutrition Center**

**Communicable Disease Investigation**

**Policy and Procedure**

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**Manual: 5.0 Communicable Disease**

Reviewed by: Leadership Team  
Approved by: Health Director  
Approved by: Medical Director  
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**Policy:** Surry County Health & Nutrition Center will investigate all reports of clusters or unusual situations, and implement early outbreak control measures to minimize further transmission of disease, in accordance with North Carolina Public Health Laws, Rules, and Regulations, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Health Director will be responsible for establishing and directing the Epi-team, as well as directing outbreak or suspected public health communicable disease investigations.  
The Communicable Disease nurses will perform surveillance, and do contact investigations for reportable diseases. NC establishes by rule a list of communicable diseases and conditions that are to be reported to the local county health director. These diseases are required to be reported by physicians, school principals, day care operators, medical facilities, operators of restaurants, and lab personnel. The CD nurse, environmental health specialist, and the Health Director then report/or investigate the disease with the cooperation of other agencies and the medical community. The state regional immunization consultant will be notified within 24 hours when a vaccine preventable disease is suspected.  
Necessary lab testing to support diagnosis or investigation is available free through the state lab. Specimens are submitted as appropriate for testing on all rash illnesses that meet case definition for rubella and measles.  
Enforcement of rules, regulations, and laws are enforced by the local health director in order to protect the health and well-being of county residents from an infectious disease.  
Public education concerning communicable disease is available to any county resident. All services are offered free of charge to county residents.

**Purpose:** To prevent and control the spread of communicable diseases; to respond timely to outbreaks and related problems in Surry County; to participate in surveillance of communicable diseases of public health importance; to manage problems associated with communicable disease from the public health perspective; to provide timely and thorough information to the public health community so that adequate interventions can be implemented; to set the standard for the SCHNC to investigate suspect cases of communicable diseases and conditions within our jurisdiction.
**Definitions:** Communicable disease: an illness due to an infectious agent or its toxic products that is transmitted directly or indirectly to a person from an infected person or animal through the agency of an intermediate animal, host, or vector, or through the inanimate environment. Examples include food borne illnesses, hepatitis, rocky mountain spotted fever, tuberculosis, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Isolation authority: the authority to limit the freedom of movement or action of a person or animal with a communicable disease or communicable condition for the period of communicability to prevent the direct or indirect conveyance of the infectious agent from the person or animal to other persons or animals who are susceptible or who may spread the agent to others.

Outbreak: an occurrence of a case or cases of a disease in a locale in excess of the usual number of cases of the disease.

Quarantine authority: the authority to limit the freedom of movement or action of persons or animals which have been exposed to or are reasonably suspected of having been exposed to communicable disease or communicable condition for a period of time as may be necessary to prevent the spread of that disease. The term also means the authority to limit the freedom of movement or action of persons who have not received immunizations against a communicable disease listed in G.S. 130-152 when the local health director determines that such immunizations are required to control an outbreak of that disease.

Communicable condition: the state of being infected with a communicable agent, but without symptoms.

STD: Sexually Transmitted Disease
PHN: Public Health Nurse
NCAC: North Carolina Administrative Code
SCHNC: Surry County Health & Nutrition Center
Epi: Epidemiology
NC DPH: North Carolina Department of Public Health
DHHS: Department of Health & Human Services
CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**Applicable Law, Rules and References:** Public Health and Related Laws of North Carolina – Article 6.
NC AC, Title 10A, Chapter 41, Epidemiology Health, Subchapter A, .0101-.0214;
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- Responsible Person(s): Epi-team

Procedures:

1. The Health Director will establish an Epi-team that will be available 24/7 to investigate reports of communicable disease and conditions from the NC DPH, hospitals, private health care providers; emergency response personnel, correctional facilities, long term care facilities, schools, child care facilities, restaurants, other government agencies, and private citizens.

2. The Epi-team is composed of a multidisciplinary staff with a multi-faceted endeavor to respond to outbreaks, to analyze trends in morbidity and mortality data, and to assist in formulating program direction based upon consideration of sound epidemiological principles.

3. SCHNC Epi-team is comprised of:
   a. Communicable Disease Nurses
   b. Health Director
   c. Medical Director
   d. Director of Nursing; Assistant Director of Nursing
   e. Environmental Health Specialist
   f. Laboratory Manager
   g. Bioterrorism Coordinator
   h. Media Specialist
   i. Clerical
   j. Immunization nurses
   k. Health Educator
   l. Quality Assurance Coordinator
   m. Staff Interpreter

4. The Epi-Team may be expanded during outbreaks to include personnel directly assigned to the investigation.

5. The Communicable Disease Nurses and the Epi-team under the direction of the Health Director will ensure prompt reporting of clusters or unusual situations and early outbreak control measures to minimize further transmission of disease.

6. Disease investigations generally begin by first contacting the physician of record for additional information. If there is no physician of record, or if the physician does not respond to requests for information promptly, or if the physician is not able to provide complete disease investigation information, then individuals may be contacted.

7. When efforts to investigate a report of communicable disease have been made and insufficient information has been obtained to complete the investigation, the health director, or her designee shall report the case with the information that has been received, and document the investigation attempts.
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With the exception of HIV/Syphilis and TB investigations, which will follow their own specific program guidance regarding investigations, the minimum effort to investigate diseases are as follows:

a. High Profile Diseases (Category A Diseases, Hepatitis A, and N. Meningitidis
   1. Individual cases within this category should be investigated immediately. Termination of the investigation should only be made in consultation with NC DPH epidemiologist
b. Bacterial STD’s
   1. At least three (3) attempts to investigate the reported diseases required
   2. One attempt must be through written correspondence to the provider
   3. If provider fails to respond, contact the patient and verify if the patient received proper treatment
c. Hepatitis B Acute, Chronic, Lab/Condition Report
   1. At least three (3) attempts to contact the provider, one of which must be through written correspondence.
   2. Patients should not be contacted until at least one (1) attempt to reach the provider has been made.
   3. The PHN should make at least three (3) attempts to contact the patient regarding contacts and control measures before assigning the event to the state.
   4. Exception: Hepatitis B lab/condition report may be assigned to the state without contacting the provider or patient if the patient:
      a. Has been previously reported and received control measures
      b. Is a male or female aged 14-50 and not pregnant
      c. Lab is not from a blood, plasma, or tissue donation center
      d. Foodborne and Diarrheal Disease
d. Hepatitis C
   1. At least three (3) attempts to contact the provider, one of which must have been made through written correspondence, and three (3) attempts to contact the patient regarding risk history and public health control measures.
e. Bacterial, Vectorborne, Viral, and Zoonotic Diseases
   1. At least three (3) attempts to contact the provider, one of which must have been through written correspondence

8. The Health Director, or her designee, will contact the NC DPH or the On Call Epidemiologist in cases of:
   a. Unusual public interest
   b. When coordination with the NC State Laboratory of Public Health or the CDC is required
   c. When additional guidance on a disease or control measures are needed.
9. Nothing in this policy shall prohibit a health director or her designee from implementing public health control measures for a suspect case while a disease investigation is in progress.

10. Reportable diseases and conditions can be found in 10A NCAC 41A .0101. Nothing in this policy shall prohibit a health director, or her designee, from investigating an outbreak of a disease or condition that occurs which is not required to be reported, but which represents a significant threat to the public’s health.

11. Communicable Disease nurses will direct communication between the health department, private physicians, and hospital infection control personnel.

12. Documentation is performed in accordance with the NC Communicable Disease Manual.

13. Surveillance records, which include lab reports, are kept in a separate file in CD office in a locked file.

14. Referral and follow up is performed in accordance with the most current DHHS NC Communicable Disease Manual.

**Reference Plans and Policies:** [www.epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd](http://www.epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd); Surry County Health & Nutrition Center Epi-Team Manual

Non-compliance with this policy could result in a non-compliance notification and/or subject to the disciplinary process.