Foodborne Illness Investigations: What You Need To Know

2. NEARS – National Environmental Assessment Reporting System
3. Working with MDPH on a FBI Investigation
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Learning Objectives

• To describe the resources available in the updated FBI Manual;

• To understand the purpose and requirements of the NEARS program;

• To understand the collaboration between the MDPH programs during a foodborne illness investigation and the importance of timely, accurate reporting.
Updated FBI Investigation Manual

• Updated FBI Control and Investigation Manual

• Available online
  – Current: on MHOA website
  – Future: on FPP website

• New chapters:
  – MAVEN
  – When There Are Sick Employees
  – Working with the State Public Health Laboratory
National Environmental Assessment Reporting System [NEARS]

• Established by the CDC in 2014 (formerly NVEAIS)

• National surveillance system that captures environmental assessment data for foodborne illness outbreaks
  ➢ identify environmental causes of outbreaks locally
  ➢ evaluate and improve food safety programs
  ➢ develop or modify program policies or regulations

• Targets state, local, tribal and territorial food safety programs

• Used only for outbreak purposes and does not replace standard establishment inspections and it is voluntary
NEARS Checklist

NEARS Establishment Observations

Date: __________________________
Collector's Name: __________________________

Are hand sinks available in the employee restroom? [ ] Yes [ ] No
# of hand sinks in employee restroom: __________________________
# hand sinks without warm water: __________________________
# hand sinks without soap: __________________________
# hand sinks without towels: __________________________

Is a hand sink available in the work area? [ ] Yes [ ] No
# of hand sinks in work area: __________________________
# hand sinks without warm water: __________________________
# hand sinks without soap: __________________________
# hand sinks without towels: __________________________

Are there cold storage units? [ ] Yes [ ] No
# of cold storage units: __________________________
# of cold storage units above 41°F: __________________________
Types observed: [ ] Reach-in [ ] Walk-in [ ] Self-Serve/Salad Bar [ ] Open Top

Are food workers using gloves while handling food? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Is there a supply of disposable gloves available? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Are any food workers handling ready-to-eat foods with bare hands? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Are there records of the recorded temperatures of incoming ingredients? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Are there records of the recorded temperatures of foods, excluding incoming ingredients? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Is there evidence of cross contamination of raw animal products with ready-to-eat foods? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Is there cooling of hot foods? [ ] Yes [ ] No

What cooling method(s) are used: __________________________

Were any foods observed in hot holding? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Were all the temperatures at 135°F or above? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Were any foods observed in cold holding? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Were all the temperatures at 41°F or below? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Were any foods observed during cooking? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Were the temperatures of measured foods during cooking at recommended temperatures? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Are wiping cloths used? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Are all wiping cloths stored in sanitizing solution between uses? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Was mechanical washing machines used? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Does the wash cycle reach the recommended temperature? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Is chemical sanitizing used? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Does the chemical sanitizing cycle have the recommended levels for the machine? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Are there any hand washed equipment? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Are hand washed equipment washed, rinsed, and sanitized? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

Are all sanitizing methods (heat or chemical) properly implemented? [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] CNO

* CNO = Could Not Observe
NEARS: Top 5 Questions

1. When do you activate NEARS program?
When we establish there is a FBI outbreak.

2. How can the LBOH be of assistance?
Local inspectors fill out one page NEARS questionnaire during their initial inspection of establishment.

3. Who enters the data?
MDPH FPP enters all NEARS data into CDC system and completes all other aspects of NEARS.

4. Is NEARS required or voluntary?
It is voluntary, but for the sake of good practice, we highly recommend it.

5. Does it replace the standard outbreak inspection?
No! NEARS establishment observation checklist may serve as an additional resource or guide.
Collaboration During a FBI Investigation

- Working Group on Foodborne Illness Control
  - Representatives from the DPH Food Protection Program, Epidemiology Program and State Public Health Lab
  - Meet twice a month
  - Representatives from LBOHs are welcome and encouraged to participate or call in especially when working on an outbreak investigation.
  - Ex. BPHC and BISD
• Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network
• FPP reviews all FBI complaints that are submitted through MAVEN.
• All FBI complaints that are faxed to FPP are entered into MAVEN.
  – Information is disseminated as needed both internally and externally.
• Time is of the essence.
• The more information entered in to the worksheet, the better!
When should LBOHs send FBI complaints to FPP or enter them into MAVEN?

- Any time you receive a reasonable complaint.
- Diagnosed AND undiagnosed cases

In 2016, LBOHs entered 17% of all FBI complaints in MAVEN
MAVEN

- Training on creating FBI complaints in MAVEN is available to those currently on MAVEN in the help section.
  - ISIS is also able to provide training to LBOHs new to MAVEN

- Call us with questions
  - Brandi Hopkins (617) 983-6731
  - Abbie Atkins (617) 983-6716
  - Frank Gyan (617) 983-6749
Stool Specimen Collection During Outbreaks

• Specimen collection issues
  – Language barriers
  – Labeling issues
  – Timing

• Sometimes food handlers are kept out of work longer because of incorrectly submitted stool specimens.

• MDPH Stool Specimen Collection How-to Video
  – New submission instructions available in English and Spanish
Questions?

ANY QUESTIONS?