



Centered on *Food Safety*

Spring 2021 Newsletter

HIGHLIGHTING PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE INTEGRATED FOOD SAFETY CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

CDC has designated five Integrated Food Safety Centers of Excellence (CoEs) each comprising a state health department and affiliated university partners. The Centers are Colorado, Minnesota, New York, Tennessee and Washington. The Centers work together to identify model practices in foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response and to serve as resources to assist other state and local public health professionals in implementing these practices.

Integrating Lessons Learned from COVID-19

Greetings from the Integrated Food Safety Centers of Excellence, as efforts to manage the spread of COVID-19 turn towards mass vaccination we wanted to highlight what was learned from the COVID-19 response and how those lessons are being integrated into our programs going forward. If you have a story you would like to share please email siobhan.dodds@tn.gov.

Leveraging Student Teams During COVID-19 Response

Student teams are a very intentional component of the Washington CoE infrastructure. In non-pandemic times, this partnership creates agility and surge capacity in managing the fluctuating workload associated with foodborne disease. We work closely with the University of Washington's [Student Epidemic Action Leaders \(SEAL\) Team](#)—led by CoE co-director Dr. Janet Baseman—and also hired two doctoral students directly onto our CoE team. Though the intention in hiring these students was never that they would work closely with our lead foodborne epidemiologist out of a large sports stadium responding to an emerging novel virus, that is exactly what happened last Spring.

In January and February 2020, this small team had been working on building tools and resources in the research database, REDCap, for our newly-launched CoE. In March, they pivoted their REDCap work to design an online scheduling and registration tool for one of the first COVID-19 testing sites in Washington state, then traveled to the site to train local public health staff in the mobile application and workflow. In the subsequent weeks they provided remote support to testing staff on the ground. Later in the pandemic their REDCap support capacity transitioned to conducting quality assurance and report development for ongoing COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing efforts.

Though managing the unexpected is familiar to those of us who work on foodborne outbreaks, continuing to do our work while also responding professionally and personally to a pandemic is not. We have found that working with our student team creates access to resources (technical expertise and surge capacity support) and provides agility in managing the more routine “expected unexpected” as well as the requirements of maintaining operations during an emergency.



SEAL
STUDENT EPIDEMIC ACTION LEADERS

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



CDC's Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) has updated its online database, [FoodNet Fast](#), to include data from THE latest population survey.

The new Population Survey Tool lets you see how often people in [FoodNet's surveillance area](#) eat various foods and have other exposures linked to diarrheal illness.

Data include responses to questions about food consumption, contact with animals, dietary practices, food handling practices, and raw milk.

You can access the FoodNet Fast Population Survey Tool at: <https://www.cdc.gov/Foodnetfast/PopSurvey>

You can learn more about the Population Survey Tool at: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodnet/foodnet-fast/faq-population-survey-tool.html>

Tennessee's Food Safety Foundation Leads to Continued Success During a Pandemic

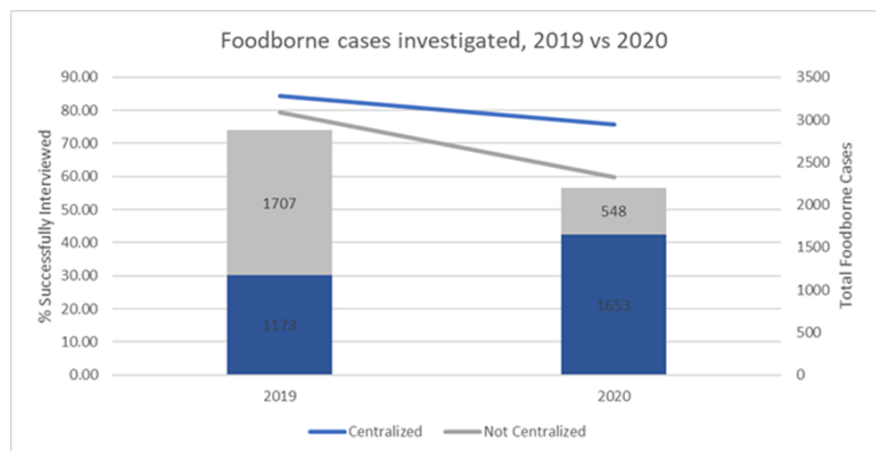
At the height of the pandemic, enteric disease surveillance and investigation could no longer be sustained at the local and regional level. The TN Food Safety programs (FoodNET, FoodCORE, and the CoE) developed a plan to interview the bulk of enteric disease cases reported statewide. Three FoodCORE, 3 FoodNet and 1 CoE staff members performed interview responsibilities previously conducted by scores of local and regional public health professionals across Tennessee. Case report forms were immediately modified to allow for direct electronic entry to streamline the interview process and avoid the need for printing and scanning.

In 2020, 1,653 cases were assigned to the FoodCORE Interview Team (FIT), a 41% increase in caseload compared to 2019. Cases investigated by the FIT in 2020 were 26% more likely to be successfully interviewed than cases investigated at the local or regional level (76% vs. 60%).

Due to our strong food safety foundation, Tennessee was able to maintain important enteric disease surveillance activities with only seven staff members, while our frontline public health staff focused on the COVID-19 response. We have shown streamlining enteric interviews to few staff at a central location is as effective, or some may argue more effective, as putting this responsibility on over-worked public health field staff.

Our Food Safety team is at the heart of our continued success. We've cross-trained staff on core functions such as interviewing and outbreak investigation, as well as, more advanced tasks including database management and SAS coding. This allowed us to rotate staff in and out of the COVID-19 response without compromising key enteric disease activities; nearly every food safety staff member worked on COVID-19 for a minimum of 3 months. This rotation helped to prevent burnout among staff.

The COVID-19 Pandemic presented incredible challenges to our work and personal lives this year. We feel one of our greatest successes was in maintaining our core operations as well as our 'team spirit', which helped us feel more normal in a year that was anything but.



FIND US ONLINE

CDC	http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/centers/
Colorado	http://www.cofoodsafety.org/
Minnesota	http://mnfoodsafetycoe.umn.edu/
New York	http://nyfoodsafety.cals.cornell.edu/
Tennessee	http://foodsafety.utk.edu/
Washington	http://foodsafety.uw.edu/

UPDATE: CoE All Products Website

Currently the CoE All Products website is still unavailable. All products can be found at individual CoE websites. The anticipated launch of the revised website is **August 2021**. Please look for more updates in upcoming newsletters.



Did you like this update, or have other ideas for resources CoEs might be able to help with? [Provide feedback](#)

Integrated Food Safety
Centers of Excellence