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Centered on Food Safety

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Integrated Food Safety
Centers of Excellence

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. CoE tools and resources can be accessed at <http://www.CoEFoodSafetyTools.org>.

Shifting Gears: CoEs and COVID-19 Support

Greetings from the Centers of Excellence in Food Safety,

During these unprecedented times public health agencies and our industry partners are focusing on COVID-19 pandemic response, and consequently routine surveillance and investigations of foodborne illnesses have been deprioritized. In response, the CoEs have shifted gears to support our partners through a variety of initiatives. We are excited to bring you the CoE Summer Newsletter highlighting the CoEs efforts to support public health agencies and industry partners in response to COVID-19.

Sustaining Enteric Disease Surveillance during the COVID-19 Response

Colorado CoE

The CO CoE has implemented two approaches to assist public health agencies continue to investigate foodborne illness cases during COVID-19: student interviewers and online surveys.

The CO CoE Enteric Disease Student Interviewer Team is composed of MPH students from the Colorado School of Public Health. The student team has been working closely with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment since March to support local public health departments in conducting most routine enteric disease interviews in the state, as well as supporting cluster and outbreak investigations. In June, the Colorado CoE collaborated with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to have the Student Interview Team conduct routine interviews for select jurisdictions in Nebraska.

In response to the pandemic, the CO CoE accelerated the launch of the Colorado Mobile Health (mHealth) Campylobacter Pilot Project. The goal of this project is to reduce interview burden by offering Campylobacter cases the option to complete their survey online. The online survey is based on the paper case investigation form and was built in REDCap using principles of online survey design. The questions map to the Colorado Electronic Disease Reporting System and once connected, will upload automatically. This pilot launched in May 2020, and we are continuously evaluating response rates, timeliness, data quality, and user feedback. We have shared resources and pilot results with other jurisdictions, and additional information is available upon request. Contact Ingrid Hewitson for more information (Ingrid.hewitson@state.co.us).

COVID-19 Resources for the Food Industry

New York CoE

Subject matter experts (SME) at the NY CoE and Cornell University, with the help of collaborators from the food industry, government, and other universities, have spearheaded efforts to help the food industry, consumers, and local and state government officials with challenges they face in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The team is communicating directly with the food industry and state and local government officials and delivering concise, science-based messaging on COVID-19 as well as providing guidance on implementing appropriate mitigation strategies.

The team has developed a comprehensive website to provide [food industry and consumer resources](#) relevant to COVID-19, including a regularly updated [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) webpage, which provides SME-curated answers to food industry and consumer questions. An SME team has also been assembled that addresses inquiries from the press and actively fights misinformation on COVID-19 related to foods and food production.

They have also created virtual “Food Industry Office Hours,” which provide participants with a chance to ask live and pre-submitted questions to a panel of SMEs. Since March 23, 2020, the NY CoE and Cornell University have hosted 31 Office Hours sessions, reaching more than 2,300 participants. Currently, Office Hours are held every other week and further information on dates and how to participate can be found on the IFS@CU’s website under [Virtual Office Hours](#).

FoodCORE, FoodNet, and Contact Monitoring

Tennessee CoE

FoodCORE and FoodNet staff, Kailey Lewis and Mugdha Golwalkar, at the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) have led the effort to build a centralized contact-monitoring system to help contain the spread of COVID-19. Beginning in late April, regional and metro staff were given the option to send cases and contacts to centralized monitoring system to help alleviate the burden of daily calls to monitor cases and contacts for symptoms.

Individuals from the regional and county health departments, state government and academic institutions were first recruited to carry out the contact-monitoring daily call responsibilities via the REDCap platform. After two months the first contact monitoring recruits were asked to shift back to their normal work operations, as a result Kailey and Mugdha worked with TDH and other state leadership to explore other options for maintaining a robust contact monitoring effort. Ultimately, the group decided to continue to use REDCap as the monitoring platform but, staffing for daily calls was moved to a third-party contracted agency. The TDH contact monitoring team continues to be the liaison for local and regional health departments, manages data quality and data interoperability between systems and other COVID-related processes, and works closely with response leadership to adjust the process to have the most impact. A total of 300 to



400 people have been involved in daily centralized monitoring efforts, with 83, 436 individuals monitored representing 11 of the 13 regional/metro health departments in TN. As outbreak specialists, the Tennessee FoodCORE and FoodNet epidemiologists are in a unique position in which they are reaching out to the community who may not be seeking health care guidance and provide additional messaging or additional education and express the importance of social distancing and staying home.



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CDC	http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/centers/
Colorado	http://www.cofoodsafety.org/
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