



# Alaska Division of Public Health

*Prevention Promotion Protection*

## **Infectious Diseases and Conditions Reportable by Health Care Providers Frequently Asked Questions**

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## **Why are some conditions notifiable to Public Health?**

As a health care provider, you are the eyes and ears of public health in Alaska. Reporting notifiable conditions makes it possible for us to detect outbreaks, prevent secondary transmission, and conduct disease surveillance. For some diseases, timely reporting can help prevent illness and death.

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## **Does HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) allow reporting of protected health information (PHI) to Public Health?**

Yes. HIPAA allows health care providers, health care facilities, and health plans to disclose protected health information to public health authorities for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability [45 CFR § 164.512(b)]. Patient consent is not required. More information on HIPAA is available here:

[http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/rr2003\\_02.pdf](http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/rr2003_02.pdf)

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## **What conditions are health care providers required to report?**

A list of notifiable conditions is available at: <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions>

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## **Are only specifically listed notifiable conditions reportable to Public Health?**

No. Notifiable conditions also include “unexplained critical illness or death”, “rare diseases of public health significance” (such as a case of *Cryptococcus gattii* infection) and disease clusters of suspected foodborne or waterborne origin (for example, a single sporadic case of gastroenteritis due to norovirus is not reportable, but a cluster of ill children with vomiting and diarrhea after returning from camp would be).

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## Should I await laboratory confirmation before reporting to Public Health?

Not necessarily. Immediately report any suspected or confirmed public health emergencies to 907-269-8000 (during business hours) or 1-800-478-0084 (afterhours). Diseases classified as public health emergencies are listed in **bold** on page 5 of the Disease Reporting Manual <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions/ConditionsReportable.pdf>

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## How do I report a case to Public Health?

When a reportable condition is diagnosed or suspected, necessary patient data may be collected on the appropriate report form. Public health should receive the report within 5 working days. All diseases which are considered public health emergencies should **immediately** be reported by telephone.

### Reporting

#### Reporting by Phone

- During business hours call 907-269-8000.
- After business hours, public health emergencies or urgent concerns should be reported by calling 1-800-478-0084.

#### Reporting by Confidential Fax

- Fax the report form to 907-561-4239.

#### The Rapid Telephonic Reporting (RTR) System

- Anchorage area telephone 561-4234.
- Outside Anchorage telephone 1-800-478-1700. An answering machine in the Section of Epidemiology answers and records each call.

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## If a notifiable condition is reportable by the laboratory, do I still need to report a case?

Yes. Don't assume that a laboratory has reported a condition. Laboratories don't report suspected cases, clinically diagnosed cases, or clusters of illness that are not laboratory-confirmed.

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**Who is responsible for reporting positive results to Public Health if a specimen is sent to other reference laboratories, or patients are referred to other providers or laboratories for testing?**

The initial ordering provider/facility, and any laboratory who has handled or processed the specimen, is obligated to report the positive result; the intent of overlapping reporting requirements is to ensure that no confirmed cases are overlooked. Some laboratories are, or will be, set-up to report to Public Health electronically to ease this burden. For labs not yet engaged in electronic reporting, paper copies can take days to reach Public Health. If you are not the ordering provider and are subsequently seeing a patient who has been diagnosed with a reportable condition, you are not obligated to report that condition again.

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**Rapid influenza tests are performed in my office, are these reportable by health care providers?**

Positive influenza test results are reportable by laboratories. If you are performing rapid influenza tests in your office, you are acting as a laboratory and should report positive results.

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**For more information, report forms, and contact information, please see:**  
<http://www.epi.alaska.gov/pubs/conditions/ConditionsReportable.pdf>