

# Coordination of multistate outbreaks: CDC perspectives

Jeremy Sobel, MD MPH  
Foodborne and Diarrheal Diseases Branch  
CDC

# Successes: Identification and notification

- Multistate outbreak are rapidly identified and reported
  - Foodborne Diseases Listserve
  - EpiX
  - Phone calls
  - Timely investigation and control activities
- Exceptions exist
  - some outbreaks are “reported” to CDC by FDA or USDA or the media

# Successes: CDC support to states in multistate outbreak investigations

- Coordinating activities from Atlanta
- Mobilizing CDC staff in Atlanta in support of state-led activities in the field
- EpiAids and other field activities
- Liaison with federal food safety regulatory agencies

# Successes: Collaboration with federal food safety regulators

- Excellent liaisons at CDC and Washington DC
- Rapid, open communications
- Close collaboration in the field
- Use of epidemiologic data to initiate recalls
- Use of epidemiologic tracebacks

# Challenge: availability of case information early in investigation

- Sometimes demographic and exposure data not available initially
- Various instruments used to document food exposures in different states
- Investigation may be slowed
  - Re-interviews postponed
  - Case finding delayed
  - Foods discarded
  - Trail grows cold
  - More cases occur before vehicle identified, action taken

# Challenge: Delays in establishing roles of states and CDC in investigation

- Need to determine who coordinates investigation as soon as practicable
- Delays may slow investigation
  - Re-interviews postponed
  - Case finding delayed
  - Foods discarded
  - Trail grows cold
  - Compromise implication of vehicle, control activities

# Challenge: availability of case information early in investigation

- Proposed solution
  - Standing workgroup to...
    - Refine and disseminate standardized questionnaires
    - Develop food- or pathogen- specific modules for questionnaires
    - Disseminate electronic instruments and databases
    - Periodically review multistate outbreak investigations, identify successful practices and gaps to be closed

# Conclusions

- Recent years have seen significant improvements in the conduct of multistate outbreak investigations
- Challenges remain
- The most promising solutions lie in close ongoing collaborative work among local, state and federal foodborne disease epidemiologists participating in this meeting