

# HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT POLICY

Title of Policy: After Action Reports Policy	
Program Area: Administration	
Approved By: <i>Susan Kelly</i>	Original Effective Date: 12/6/13
Susan Kelly, Health Officer	Revised Dates:

## 1.0 POLICY

The Harford County Health Department (HCHD) must keep track of major health events and exercises for quality improvement purposes. An After Action Report (AAR) is a record of what happened during an event or exercise. This document is used to implement changes and improve the health department's capabilities.

## 2.0 PURPOSE

The AAR includes a summary of the event, analyzes the performance of activities and recommends improvements where applicable based on the analysis.

## 3.0 PROCEDURES

A Division Director or Program Head Supervisor will complete an After Action Report following the conclusion of an event or exercise (including, but not exclusive to: communicable disease outbreaks, environmental public health hazards, and natural disasters) which meets one or more of the following criteria listed in Category A and one or more of the following criteria listed in Category B:

### Category A

- 1) The event/exercise brings to light new knowledge on how to respond to this type of event.
- 2) A known gap or flaw in the current policy is found to have serious consequences.
- 3) The event/exercise reflects the need for further education of responders to improve performance.

### Category B

- 1) The health department was working with two or more other agencies during the event.
- 2) The event had a possible impact of affecting 200 or more persons in the community.
- 3) The event sparked widespread public interest.

The AAR template should be completed no later than 90 days following the conclusion of the event.

The length of an AAR will vary. However, a minimum of beginning, middle, and ending steps should be described in the Activities Section of the report. The activity section of the report is intended to be a further breakdown of the Capabilities Summary into steps taken. Observations should reflect an explanation of the activities listed.

To ensure effective improvements are identified, it is imperative that a Hot Wash (debriefing) is held in a timely manner to maintain the momentum of the exercise/event and keep the recollections of the participants as fresh as possible. Participant feedback is

collected on what occurred so that observations, thoughts and ideas about the events and process can be documented. An Improvement Plan will then be generated as a result of the evaluation process.

- 4.0 Attachment 1- completed example of an After Action Report (AAR)
- Attachment 2 – AAR template

## Harford County Health Department (HCHD) After Action Report

### Salmonella Outbreak/XXX Day Care 2012-236

Prepared By: Jean Toth, RN, HCHD Program Supervisor, Communicable Disease

XX-XX-12

#### Executive Summary

- Objective: Manage the Salmonella outbreak at the XXXXXXXX Child Development Center at XXXXXXXX.
- Program: Communicable Disease, Environmental Health
- Mission: Response/Collaboration
- Participating Organizations: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Office of Outbreak Response; Harford County Health Department Communicable Disease and Environmental Health Division; XXXXXXXX Health Clinic Public Health Division; XXXXXX Child Development Center at XXXXXX; Child Youth Services at XXX; Industrial Hygiene at XXXX
- Major Strengths: All agencies demonstrated a willingness to collaborate and manage the outbreak event. The Center instituted most if not all recommendations and the outbreak was well contained.
- Issues: Command and Control of the event was difficult to decipher due to the number of agencies involved and the fact that two county level and one federal agency was represented. Subject matter experts could have been utilized more effectively.
- Primary Areas for Improvement: More frequent communication with DHMH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response (OIDEOR) and other agencies involved.

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#### Overview

Outbreak Investigation: Began XX-XX-XX ended XX-XX-XX.

**Location:** XXX Child Development Center at the XXX. The children involved live in Harford County and Cecil County but the Center is located on Federal property.

**Number of Participants:** At least ten senior staff were involved in the investigation.

#### Analysis of Capabilities

Capability: Epidemiological Surveillance and Investigation

**Capability Summary:** The nurses at XXX Health Clinic at XXXX contacted the Harford County Health Department for assistance when the number of sick children at the Child

Development Center increased and the cause/source was not evident. The health department's communicable disease division called on the environmental health division for assistance during the outbreak investigation. A meeting was arranged to include the administrative staff from the Child Development Center, public health nurses at XXXX as well as an industrial hygiene officer from XXX. A discussion took place about the cases' similarities and differences and a walk through evaluation of the Center was performed. Communication with an outbreak coordinator at DHMH took place throughout the investigation. Information was gathered at the Child Development Center and recommendations were shared with all parties involved.

**Activity 1:** Obtaining information about the outbreak.

**Observation 1:** All involved parties/agencies readily shared case information, offered access to the physical site and subject matter experts were available for consultation.

**Analysis:** Although subject matter experts were available, they were perhaps not effectively utilized.

**Recommendations:** Subject matter experts should be consulted on a routine basis throughout an outbreak investigation.

**Activity 2:** Determining command and control of the event.

**Observation 1:** There was some noted confusion regarding the determination of which agency would lead the outbreak investigation.

**Analysis:** Determining command and control can be challenging when multiple jurisdictions are involved in an investigation as was the situation in this investigation with two county health departments and a federal agency. Local communicable disease staff consulted with the state Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response office for guidance.

**Recommendations:** Communicable disease staff should consult the HCHD Epi and Surveillance Response Plan as well as consult with DHMH OIDEOR in outbreaks affecting more than one county or state. The state will provide guidance if a multi-county outbreak occurs.

**Activity 3:** Developing recommendations based on discussions and an on-site visit.

**Observation 1:** The staff at the Child Development Center, and the public health nurses at XXXX were very receptive to the recommendations. The infections were self-limiting and no further cases were identified.

**Analysis:** Based on initial reports received by the communicable disease division, the environmental health division was contacted in order to assist with the investigation.

**Recommendations:** It is important to gather as much information as possible at the time of a report so that a decision can be made as to whether an investigation

will take place and then how the investigation will be carried out so that the source of illness can be identified as soon as possible. Therefore, asking for assistance and discussing the information with all partners is critical to the containment of the outbreak.

### **Corrective Action Plan**

- 1) More frequent communication with DHMH OIDEOR (subject matter experts). They may in turn contact the CDC.
- 2) Ensure all communicable disease staff review the HCHD Epi and Surveillance Response Plan which contains guidance on cross-boundary outbreaks.
- 3) Meet or communicate with all involved parties and if necessary, other divisions within the health department, as soon as possible. Discussions should include whether or not an investigation is warranted and if so, how the investigation will proceed.

**TITLE: HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT AFTER ACTION REPORT**  
**EVENT/EXERCISE TITLE:**  
**PREPARED BY:**  
**DATE AAR PRODUCED:**

### Executive Summary

- Objective:
  - Real Event or Exercise
  - Program:
  - Mission: Response
  - Participating Organization: Harford County Health Department
  - Major Strengths:
  - Primary Areas for Improvement:
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### Drill Overview

Outbreak Investigation: *Date and Time*

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

### Analysis of Capabilities

Capability: *Example - Epidemiological Surveillance and Investigation*

Capability Summary: *Events of real/exercise response.*

Activity 1: *Summary of first step taken by health department team.*

**Observation 1:** *Full description of step or what happened.*

**Analysis:** *Describe positives and negatives of action.*

**Recommendations:** *Should anything be changed about the first step.*

Activity 2: *Description of second/middle step taken by health department team.*

**Observation 1:**

**Analysis:**

**Recommendations:**

Activity 3: *Description of ending step taken by health department team.*

**Observation 1:**

**Analysis:**

**Recommendations:**

*Add activities as needed. They may be needed depending on the complexity of the investigation. There is no limit or maximum number of activities.*

**Corrective Action Plan (Conclusion)**

- 1) *What steps can be taken to improve the investigation process.*
- 2)