

## **Guidelines for Writing a Final Outbreak Investigation Report**

(This outline should be adapted as needed for the purpose of clear, concise communication)

### **Cover page should include the following:**

**Date Written:**

**Release Date:**

**To:**

**From:**

**Report Co-authors:**

**Peer Reviewers:**

**Date Reported:**

**Reported By:**

**Person Contacted:**

**Also Contacted:**

**First page of report:**

**1. Introduction**

- a. Date and time notification was received by your agency
- b. Describe the context of the outbreak:
  - Who → population affected
  - Where → location / place / setting
  - When → Time of onset
  - What → describe clinical findings
  - Why → suspected or known etiology or risk factors
- c. Date and time investigation was initiated by the agency
- d. Describe the primary objective(s) of the investigation

**2. Background**

- a. Brief scientific background on the disease and/or suspected etiologic agent

**3. Investigation Methods**

- a. Epidemiologic:
  - Initial investigation methods including interviews, site visits, conference calls, etc.
  - Case definition
  - Data collection (case-finding and line listing, medical record reviews)
  - Data analysis methods (e.g., descriptive epi, hypothesis generating interviews, cohort or case-control studies, other epidemiological data collection and analysis)
- b. Microbiological/toxicological
  - Laboratories involved.
  - Type of clinical specimens and sources
  - Laboratory methods
- c. Environmental
  - Review reports developed by environmental responders
  - Describe any trace back investigations that were done (e.g. food products, etc.)
  - Describe any environmental specimens collected

**4. Results**

- a. Epidemiological- descriptive epidemiology results including:
  - Cases
    1. Demographic data
    2. Clinical data (symptoms, signs, duration of illness, incubation period.
    3. Outcome of illness (hospitalization, death, chronic effects)
  - Location of cases (facility, county, city, etc.)
  - Epidemic curve and other graphs
  - Compare characteristics of cases and controls, if applicable
  - Describe exposed population, if applicable
  - Describe the results of analytical studies
- b. Microbiological/toxicological
  - Number and nature of specimens submitted for testing and results of laboratory testing
- c. Environmental
  - Describe observations and pertinent findings from environmental investigation(s)
  - Describe the results of trace-back investigations
  - Results of environmental testing (if any)

**5. Limitations of the study**

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- a. Discuss any factors that limited the investigation such as (small number of cases, poor information, late reporting, limited resources to conduct investigation, etc.)
- 6. Conclusion / Discussion:** Analysis and interpretation of the investigation results and any conclusions drawn as a result of this investigation
  - a. Discuss the main hypothesis
  - b. Describe the likely causative agent and mode of transmission.
  - c. Describe the risk factors
  - d. Explain what was done to control the outbreak.
  - e. Describe the conclusions and actions taken
- 7. Discuss lessons learned and recommendations for controlling disease and/or preventing/mitigating exposure:**
  - a. Recommendations to improve investigation and management of such outbreaks in the future
  - b. Measures to prevent similar outbreaks in the future
  - c. Educational message to the public, public health professionals and policy makers.

### **Additional instructions:**

- Outbreak report should be completed within one month of outbreak closure.
- A final outbreak report is required for all outbreaks. Outbreak report templates may be used for most outbreaks. A more detailed report written following these guidelines should be used in the following situations:
  - Complex outbreaks for which the template cannot effectively describe the outbreak
  - Any outbreak in which an analytical study was done
  - Outbreaks that required a site visit
  - The decision to write a detailed outbreak report in any outbreak should be made on a case-by-case basis
- Please be careful not to mention any personal or entity identifying information
- Refrain from attributing any specific info to a specific individual
- Reports should be written objectively based on scientific data
- Cite references used