



National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Report Highlights Role of Local Health Departments in Addressing Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antibiotic Resistance**

*— Results of 2019 assessment can inform health department response to COVID-19 in healthcare facilities —*

**Washington, DC, May 18, 2020** – [The National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), the voice of the country’s nearly 3,000 local health departments (LHDs), released [high-level results](#) of its 2019 Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) and Antibiotic Resistance (AR) Assessment. The resource highlights the extent to which LHDs engage in HAI/AR activities, existing LHD partner engagement, the role that LHDs play in outbreak response, and LHD capacity and infrastructure in HAI/AR prevention and control. These results can help inform current and future actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in healthcare facilities.

HAIs are infections people acquire while receiving treatment or care for another condition. While they can occur in any healthcare setting, about one out of every 31 hospital patients has an HAI. Antibiotic resistance is a major public health threat that compounds the challenge of HAIs. COVID-19 has brought to the forefront the importance of public health in healthcare and community settings and illuminated the ripple effects that gaps in infection prevention and control can have in facilities and communities. A public health workforce that can quickly and effectively respond to emerging infections and HAIs, and help to implement prevention measures prior to an outbreak, is vital to the safety of our country, both during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

NACCHO conducted a survey in 2019 to better understand the scale of LHD involvement in preventing and responding to HAIs and other infections in healthcare settings. The assessment

found that LHDs support HAI/AR prevention and response efforts in a variety of ways, and most commonly reported providing education, conducting surveillance, coordinating with state HAI programs, and supporting stewardship. LHDs have established key relationships with healthcare facilities in their communities—including nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, and short-stay acute care hospitals—and conduct outbreak investigation and control, share information, and provide education to prevent and control HAIs/AR in these settings.

Despite the important role of public health in HAI/AR activities, LHDs face various challenges, including lack of funding for staffing and staff training, which impact the ability of LHDs to conduct activities across the spectrums of both infection threats and healthcare setting. COVID-19 has increased the visibility of these problems; however, these challenges have existed for years and they will persist long after the COVID-19 response, if unaddressed. Emergency funding is necessary to bolster current activities and meet surge needs but will not be a sufficient solution to address the larger, ongoing issues. NACCHO's 2018 Forces of Change survey identified that nearly 20% of all LHDs foresee budget cuts in their next fiscal year, while 21% reported budget cuts in their current fiscal year. It is critical that LHDs receive sufficient funding to sustain workforce capacity related to HAI/AR to address this public health threat.

For more information on LHD HAI/AR activities, access the [2019 Healthcare-Associated Infection & Antibiotic Resistance Assessment Findings](#). You can also [learn more](#) about NACCHO's HAI work on our website and [view information](#) on NACCHO's COVID-19 Response.

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### **About NACCHO**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the country's nearly 3,000 local health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org).