Welcome to the Jungle:
An Interactive Outbreak Adventure!

Disclosures + Disclaimers
Rebecca is employed by Diversey—A Solenis Company. The company pays her expenses to attend this meeting & create educational content (salary). The company has had no input into this presentation from a commercial interest.
The following material does not replace your existing facility policies & procedures. Always consult national/regional public health partners for most up-to-date recommendations.
Lastly, this session is intended to provide an overview of outbreak response & does not address every single element of a healthcare outbreak in detail.
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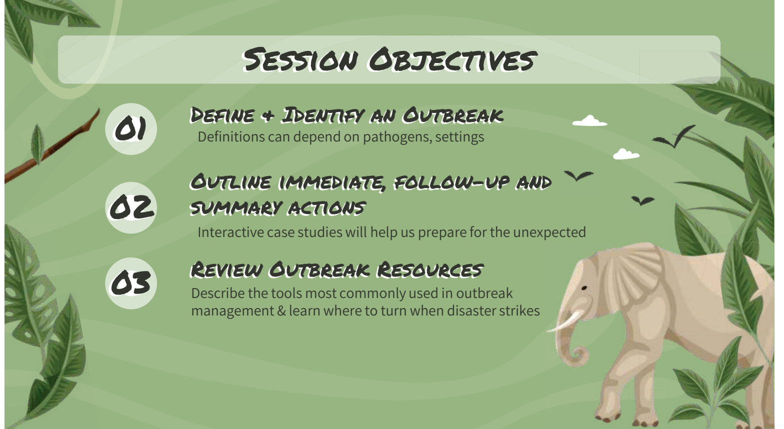
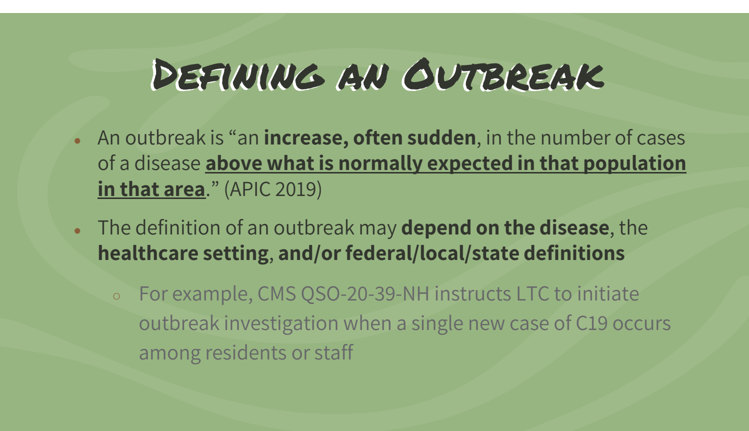
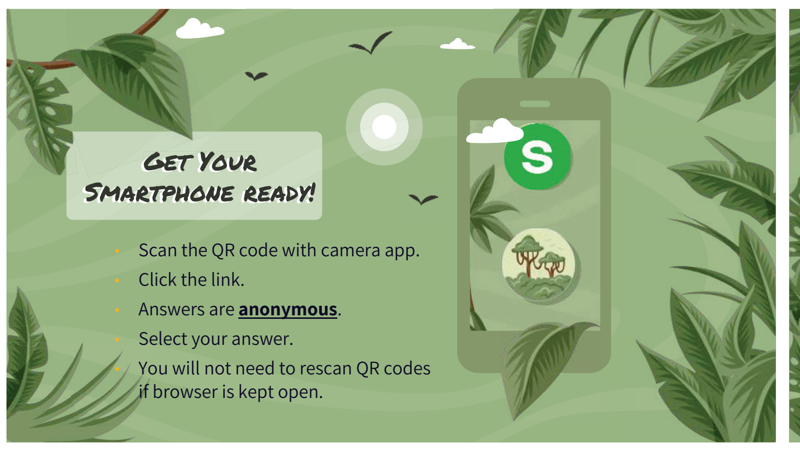
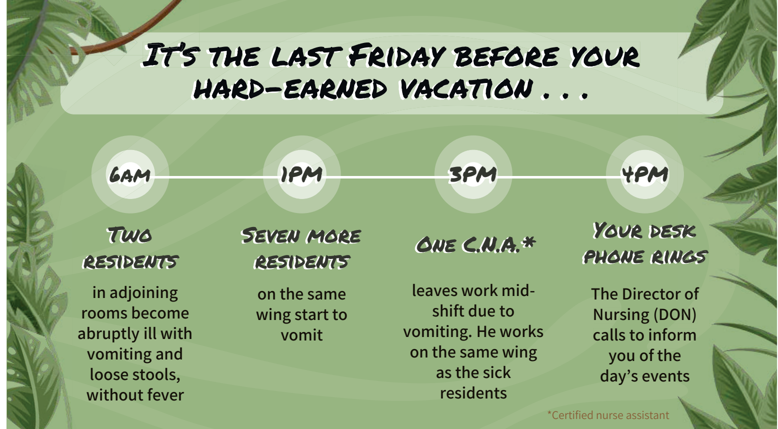

Session Objectives
01 Define + Identify an Outbreak
Definitions can depend on pathogens, settings
02 Outline immediate, follow-up and summary actions
Interactive case studies will help us prepare for the unexpected
03 Review Outbreak Resources
Describe the tools most commonly used in outbreak management & learn where to turn when disaster strikes

01
What Is An Outbreak?
Before you can successfully manage an outbreak, you need to know what it is . . . and what it is not.


Defining an Outbreak
An outbreak is "an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area." (APIC 2019)
The definition of an outbreak may depend on the disease, the healthcare setting, and/or federal/local/state definitions
For example, CMS QSO-20-39-NH instructs LTC to initiate outbreak investigation when a single new case of C19 occurs among residents or staff

Case Study #1





As the long-term care (LTC) IP, would you initiate an outbreak investigation?

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It's an outbreak! Act Fast– Cheetah fast!

Quick assessment/triage:

- 9 residents, 1 direct resident care employee
- Same wing/location
- All w/ nausea & vomiting
- Fast incubation period (approx. 36 hours)

http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/NorovirusEducationalPresentation.pdf

Given setting, incubation period and symptoms, what pathogen is the most likely cause of the outbreak?

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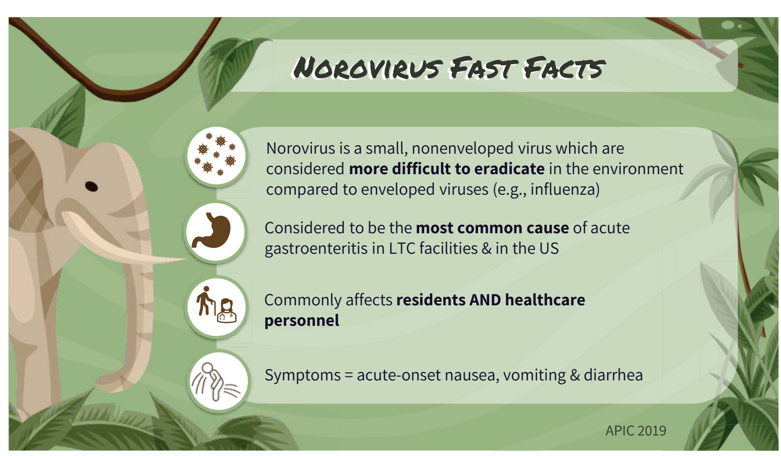

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After quickly assessing the situation, what is your next immediate move?

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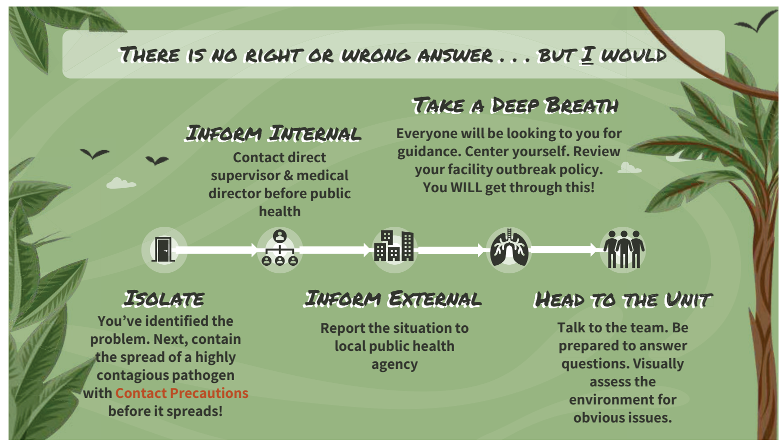
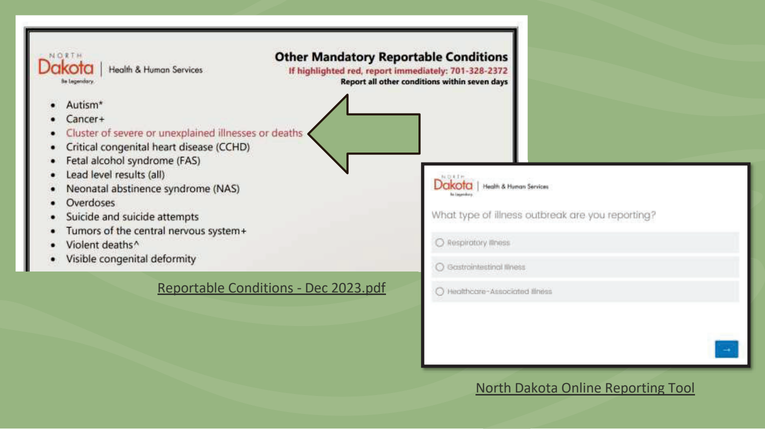


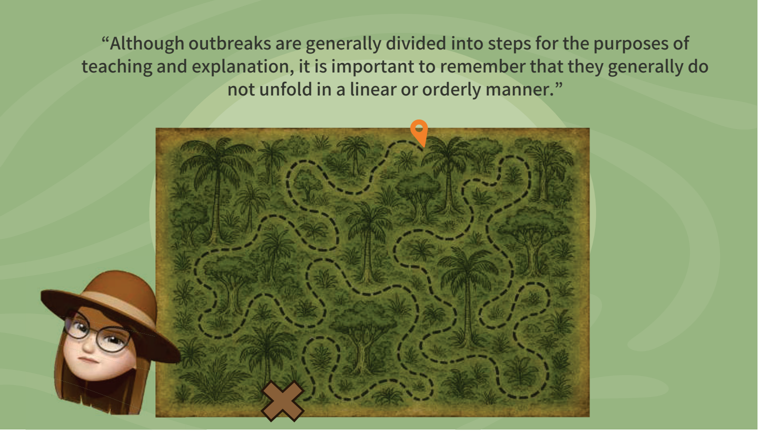

North Dakota | Health & Human Services

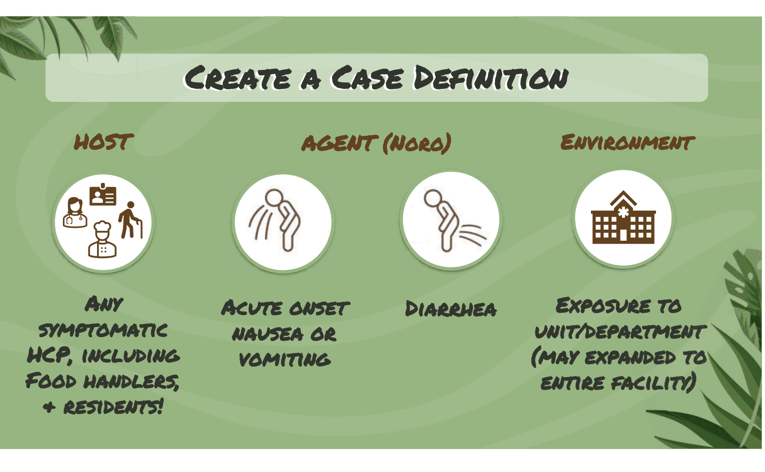
Other Mandatory Reportable Conditions

If highlighted red, report immediately: 701-328-2372

Report all other conditions within seven days

- Autism*
- Cancer+
- Cluster of severe or unexplained illnesses or deaths
- Critical congenital heart disease (CCHD)
- Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)
- Lead level results (all)
- Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS)
- Overdoses
- Suicide and suicide attempts
- Tumors of the central nervous system+
- Violent deaths^
- Visible congenital deformity





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Big question: are you cancelling your vacation?

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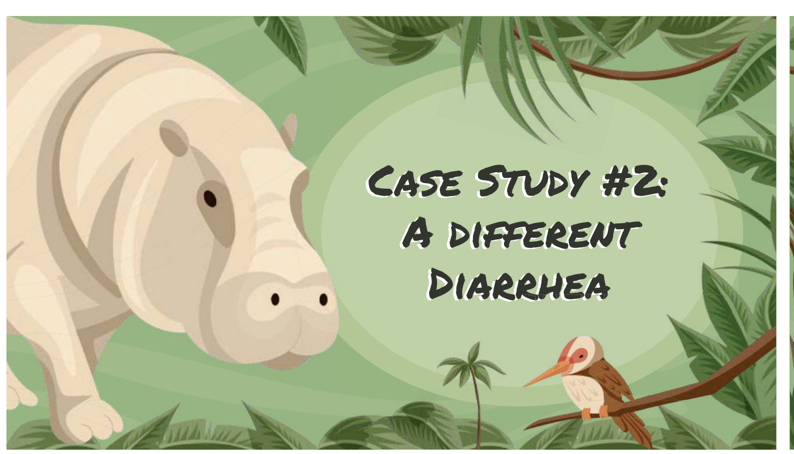

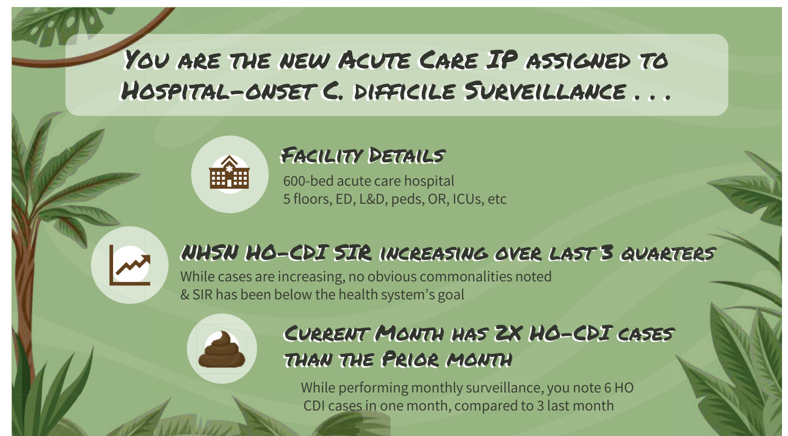

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As the ACH IP, would you initiate an outbreak investigation?

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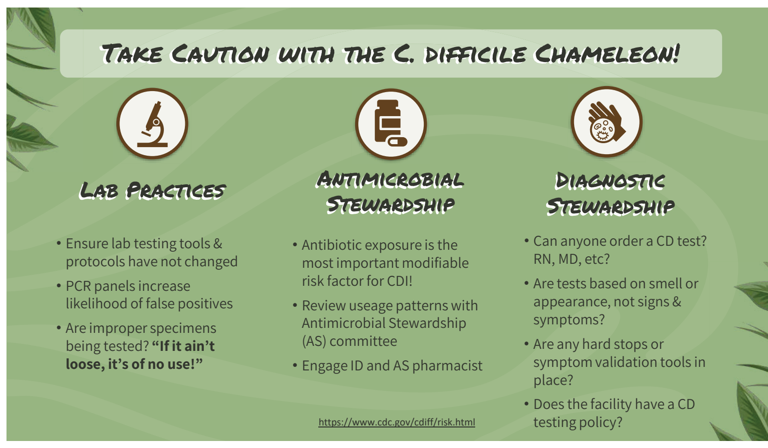
It Depends! What You See Isn't Always What You Get.

Some chameleons change color to camouflage themselves to avoid detection.

Quick assessment/triage:

- Symptoms of all positive cases not yet known—validate first!
- Pay close attention to symptom onset date
  - Many persons admit w/ symptoms, but are not tested immediately
- No identified location commonality (yet)
- *C. difficile* is a common gut colonizer, so a positive test does not always equal clinical infection



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As the ASC IP, would you initiate an outbreak investigation?

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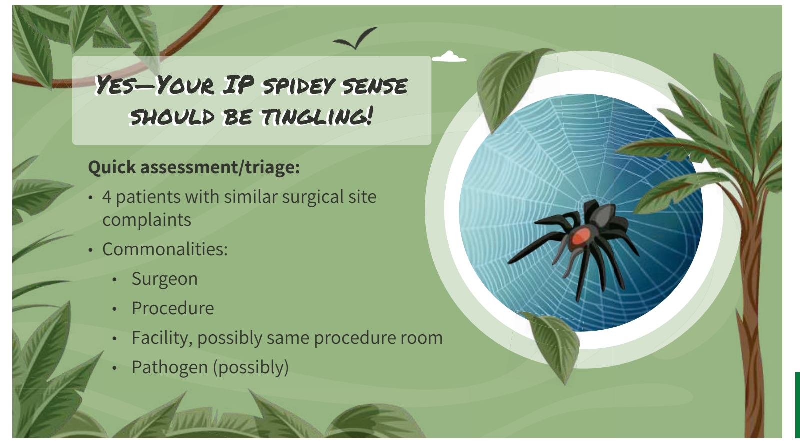

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After starting a line list, what is your next step?

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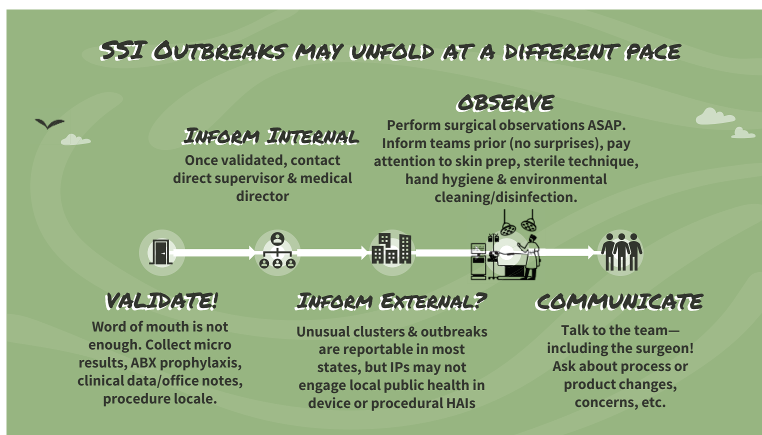
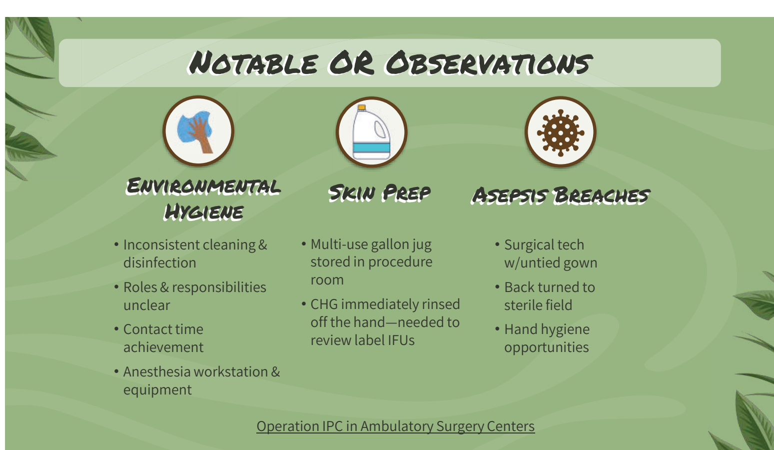
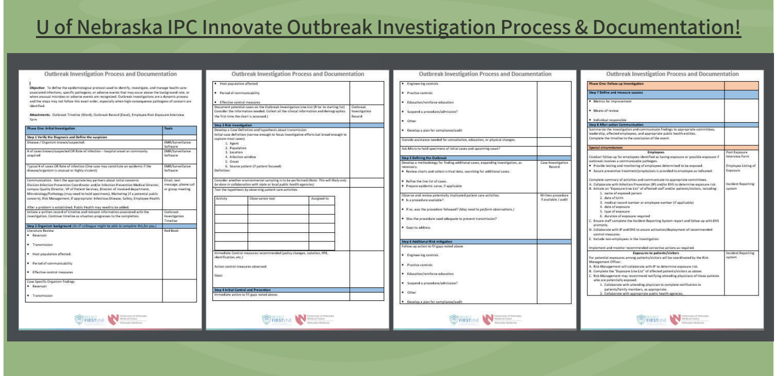
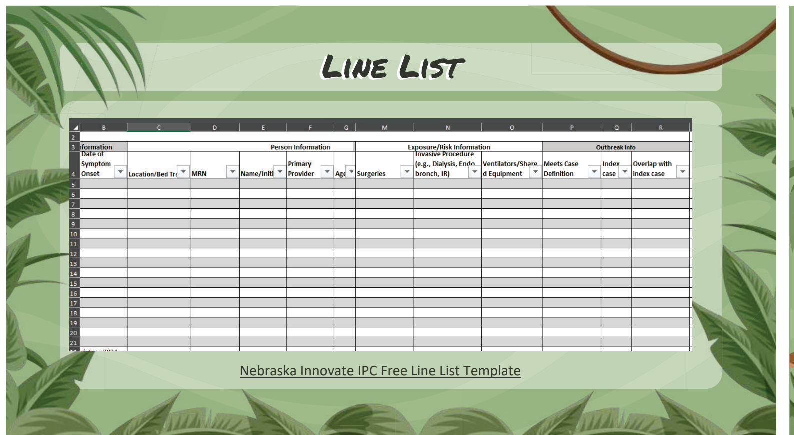


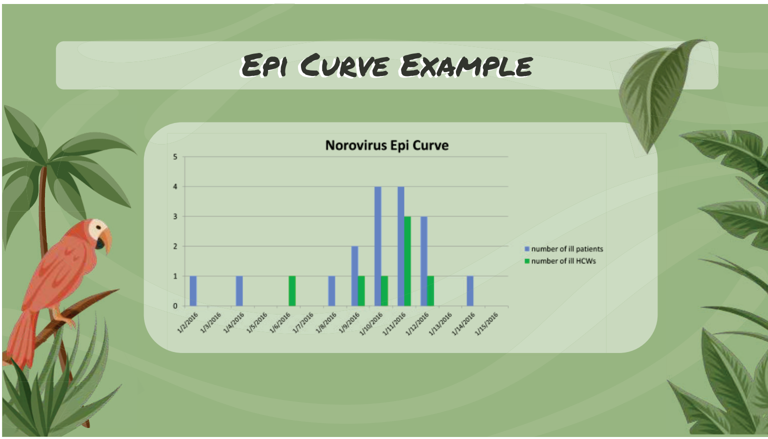


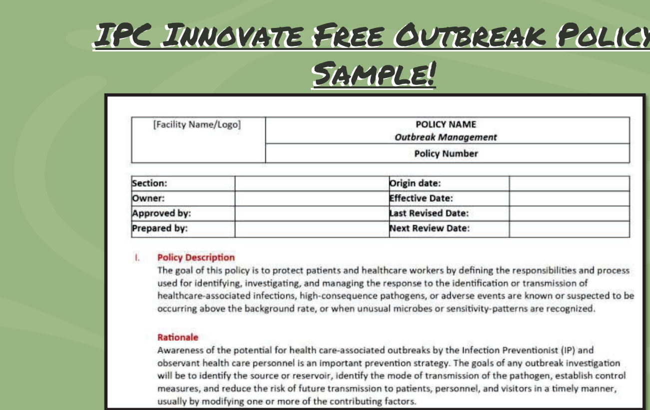
U of Nebraska IPC Innovate Outbreak Investigation Process & Documentation!





Nebraska Innovate IPC Free Line List Template





[Facility Name/Logo]	POLICY NAME *Outbreak Management*
	Policy Number

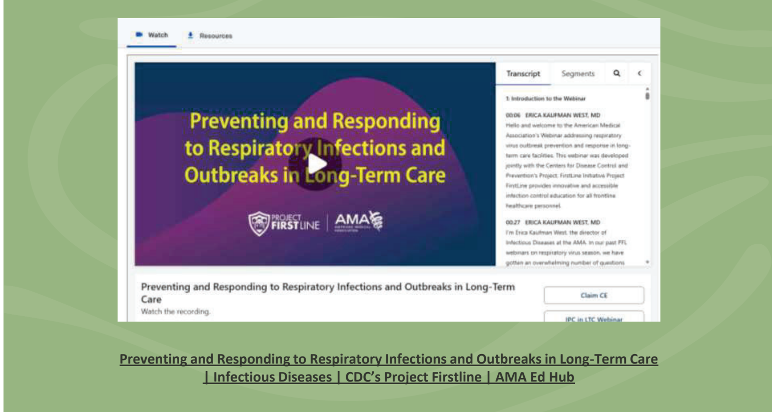
Section:		**Origin date:**	
Owner:		**Effective Date:**	
Approved by:		**Last Revised Date:**	
Prepared by:		**Next Review Date:**	

I. **Policy Description**

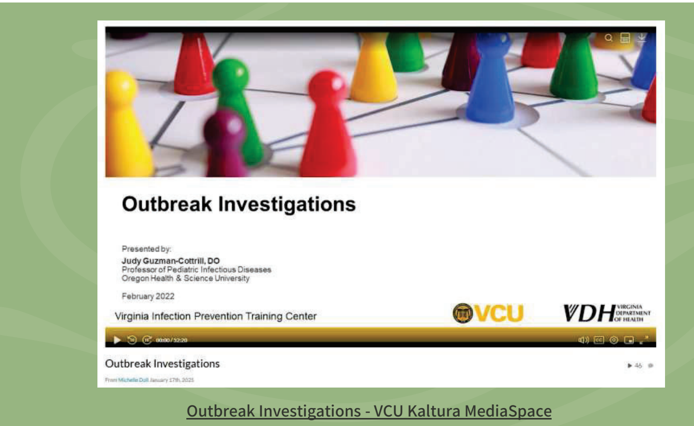
The goal of this policy is to protect patients and healthcare workers by defining the responsibilities and process used for identifying, investigating, and managing the response to the identification or transmission of healthcare-associated infections, high-consequence pathogens, or adverse events are known or suspected to be occurring above the background rate, or when unusual microbes or sensitivity-patterns are recognized.

Rationale

Awareness of the potential for health care-associated outbreaks by the Infection Preventionist (IP) and observant health care personnel is an important prevention strategy. The goals of any outbreak investigation will be to identify the source or reservoir, identify the mode of transmission of the pathogen, establish control measures, and reduce the risk of future transmission to patients, personnel, and visitors in a timely manner, usually by modifying one or more of the contributing factors.



Preventing and Responding to Respiratory Infections and Outbreaks in Long-Term Care | Infectious Diseases | CDC's Project Firstline | AMA Ed Hub



Outbreak Investigations - VCU Kaltura MediaSpace

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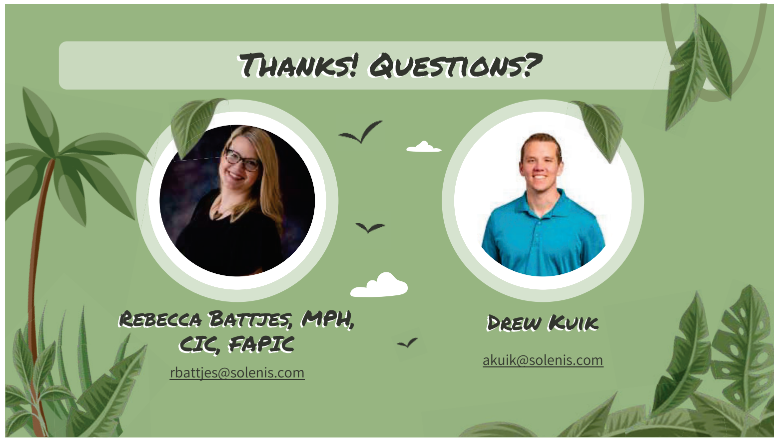
ND Infection Prevention
The North Dakota Infection Prevention and Control app is designed by the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services to raise awareness of and best practices for infection prevention in the state. This app includes a variety of resources, videos, interactive content, games and trainings for health care individuals across the state to implement in their organizations.
Google Play
App Store
Scan me!
NORTH
Dakota
Health & Hum
Infection P


Thanks! Questions?
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References
Most references & weblinks are on individual slides!
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC). (2019). Infection Prevention Guide to Long-Term Care, 2nd edition.
Campbell E, Eichhorn CL. Outbreak Investigations. APIC Text. 2020. Available at https://text.apic.org/toc/epidemiology-surveillance-performance-and-patient-safety-measures/outbreak-investigations with subscription only. Accessed January 29. 2026.
Flood, M & Sharma M. 2016. Double Whammy: Mixed Genotype Norovirus Outbreak in an Adult Psychiatric Unit. The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America Spring Conference. Poster presentation #634. Available upon request.