Outbreak FAQ

Q: What constitutes an outbreak?
A: A single confirmed case in the following setting initiates a facility-wide public health investigation:
- Long-term care facilities include skilled nursing facilities (nursing homes) and assisted living facilities (community-based residential facilities and residential care apartment complexes).

Q: Why is this work important?
A: Detect COVID-19 in one of these facilities is an indicator that the facility is following proper notification procedures to public health to facilitate testing and education to protect their residents, employees and patrons by encouraging use of appropriate isolation and infection control practices.

Q: What happens when an outbreak is confirmed?
A: Public Health will step in and proactively offer the facility support, guidance, recommendations set forth by Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Q: Who is involved in the investigation process?
A: Public Health nursing staff and environmental health staff teams.

Q: **What do the CDC and DHS recommend for outbreaks?**
A: Depending on the type of facility, recommendations and guidelines will vary. Here are some high-level steps that are recommended:
- Proactive testing. This helps address outbreaks early on while they are easier to isolate and manage.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces
- Proper hand-washing etiquette
- Physical distancing (six feet or more between individuals); encouraging wearing a mask or cloth face covering; allowing employees to stay home when sick.
- Review of policy and environmental controls in place.

Q: Do you provide facility-wide investigations for non-COVID-19 issues?
A: Yes. We monitor all communicable diseases and will initiate investigations as appropriate.

Q: How long does a COVID-19 outbreak investigation last?
A: Facility-wide and outbreak investigations are considered closed when two maximum incubations periods have passed since the last possible

exposure to a COVID-19 case in the facility without any new cases. For COVID-19, two maximum incubation periods are 28 days (maximum incubation period is 14 days).

Q: Is this information readily available to facilities in Brown County?
A: Yes. Both the CDC and DHS provide print materials, guidance and other information for all types of businesses, workplaces and facilities.
- CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html
- DHS: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm

Q: Does Public Health provide guidance and recommendations that is specific to facilities in Brown County?
A: Yes. Our Environmental Health team created a reopening guide for local businesses, entities and establishments in Brown County to assist with safe reopening and continued healthy operations. There are also volumes of data through various state departments to help answer questions, provide guidance, and address concerns.

Q: Are there other facilities public health would watch for outbreaks?
A: Yes. Two or more confirmed cases in the following settings initiate a facility-wide public health investigation:
- **Group housing facilities** include correctional facilities, homeless shelters, dormitories, group homes.
- **Health care facilities** include hospitals, clinics, dialysis centers, hospice, and in-home care.
- **Workplace (non-healthcare)** settings include manufacturing and production facilities, distribution facilities, offices and other indoor workplaces.
- **Other settings** include adult or child day care centers, restaurants, event spaces and religious settings.

Q: Is this information available to the general public?
A: Yes. Information can be found on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) website: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/investigations.htm