

June 25, 2013

INFECTIOUS DISEASE REPORTING

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administrative (VHA) Directive establishes requirements for the mandatory reporting of infectious diseases designated as reportable to local, district, and State public health authorities, and territorial entities legally authorized to receive such reports.

AUTHORITY: 38 U.S.C. 7301(b).

2. BACKGROUND

a. VHA recognizes the importance of public health and prevention. In that regard, it is important that policy and programs emphasize improving and protecting the health of Veterans and VHA employees through the reporting of infectious diseases.

b. Each State or territorial legislature establishes a list of diseases designated as reportable to the local, district, State, or territorial entities legally authorized to receive such reports. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a list of notifiable diseases and requests that States report voluntarily. Local health care facilities or local health departments do not report disease occurrences directly to CDC. The reportable disease laws of States or territories do not apply to Federal entities, including VHA, although many VHA health care facilities do voluntarily report as a measure of sound public health practice.

c. Current VHA Handbooks and Directives contain some language around disease reporting. VHA Handbook 1605.1, Privacy and Release of Information, states, "VHA may disclose individually-identifiable information...to Federal, State, and/or local public health authorities charged with the protection of the public health or safety pursuant to a standing request or other applicable legal authority." VHA Handbook 1605.1 only describes the authority for disclosing protected health information and does not establish policy on whether or not VA facilities should or should not report infectious diseases to local, state, and federal public health authorities (see VHA Handbook 1605.1, pars. 27 and 28).

d. VHA Handbook 1605.02, Minimum Necessary Standard for Protected Health Information, recognizes the reporting of communicable diseases and other reportable conditions to authorities external to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as one of many routine and recurring disclosures, but does not further clarify how or when such reports should be made.

e. Thus, VHA's policy on reporting of reportable diseases to local and/or State public health authorities has been limited. This VHA Directive establishes a requirement for VHA health care facilities to report on the designated reportable diseases according to the laws, regulations, and policies of States and territories and to follow VHA Handbook 1605.1 and other applicable laws on release of information.

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES JUNE 30, 2018

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3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that VHA health care facilities will report diseases designated as reportable to the local, district, State, or territorial entities legally authorized to receive such reports.

4. ACTION

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health establishes the policies and assigns actions for mandatory reporting of infectious diseases.

b. **Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director.** The VISN Director ensures that Medical facility directors' report diseases designated as reportable to entities legally authorized to receive such reports.

c. **Medical Facility Director.** Medical facility Directors is responsible for:

(1) Reporting infectious diseases designated as reportable to the local, district, State, or territorial entities legally authorized to receive such reports;

(2) Ensuring facilities' compliance with VHA policy on the disclosure of VHA data to outside entities; and

(3) Ensuring disclosures to entities outside VHA are in accordance with the Release of Information requirements in VHA Handbook 1605.1.

5. REFERENCES

a. VHA Handbook 1605.1, Privacy and Release of Information.

b. VHA Handbook 1605.02, Minimum Necessary Standard for Protected Health Information.

c. VHA Directive 2006-016, "Mandatory Reporting of Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI).

6. FOLLOW UP RESPONSIBILITIES: The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Services, Office of Public Health (10P3) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions are to be directed to (202) 461-1040 or e-mailed to: publichealth@va.gov .

7. RESCISSION: None. This VHA Directive expires June 30, 2018.

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Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION: Emailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List 6/26/2013