

# Academic – practice partnerships: Addressing diverse infection prevention and control needs across Alabama



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CATEGORY: **Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)**

The Alabama Department of Public Health established the Alabama Regional Center for Infection Prevention and Control Training and Technical Assistance to meet the consultation and support service needs surrounding infection prevention and control throughout the state. The center has produced many resources and trainings that have reached a large audience.

## The “What”

The Alabama Regional Center for Infection Prevention and Control Training and Technical Assistance (ARC IPC) was established in 2021 with Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) funds to meet the consultation and support service needs surrounding infection prevention and control (IPC) throughout the state of Alabama. ARC IPC is a collaborative effort of the Alabama Department of Public Health’s (ADPH) Infectious Disease and Outbreaks Division (ID&O) and the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s School of Public Health. The center provides training and technical assistance to IPC and public health professionals in areas needed to detect, respond to, control, and prevent infectious disease outbreaks.



ARC IPC brings together a diverse team of IPC experts with extensive knowledge leading to the development of a wide range of trainings and resources to enhance and support IPC efforts across Alabama’s health care and public health systems. The center provides training and technical assistance to a wide range of audiences including local, district, and state health department IPC personnel; infection control managers and nurses located in in-patient and out-patient health care facilities and long-term care facilities; hospital epidemiologists; school nurses; and other infection control practitioners.

## The “So What”

As of May 2023, ARC IPC has produced 64 trainings reaching over 52,000 participants, provided over 35,000 contact hours of training, and filled over 1,793 hours of Alabama Board of Nursing CEUs. ARC IPC has:

- Hosted or co-hosted twenty-four (24) webinars on a variety of topics around COVID-19 and long COVID, as well as evolving infectious disease issues such as antimicrobial resistance; *Candida auris*; mpox; vaccine recommendations and efficacy; and health misinformation.
- Produced over seventeen (17) podcasts on current IPC topics including mpox; the evolution of COVID-19 and its variants; COVID-19 vaccinations; environmental cleaning; hepatitis in children; and tick-borne illnesses.



More stories are available at [stories.cste.org](https://stories.cste.org)

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**Staff turnover is a challenge. More trained infection preventionists are needed to help meet the needs at facilities.**



- Created materials and a clearinghouse of resources available on its website, including links to over 260 resources, broken down by key infection prevention topics for specific populations. The website includes five (5) blog posts on hot topics within infectious diseases, a personal protective equipment (PPE) guidebook, a video explaining differences between mask types, and a series of videos geared towards school nurses around the use of disinfectants in schools, signs and symptoms of the flu and COVID-19.
- Created job aids and training around the Dispensing and Vaccination Clinic (DVC) procedures for ADPH employees. This includes two (2) standalone training videos and “just-in-time” training videos.
- Partnered with the Alabama Nursing Homes and Long-Term Care Facilities Strike Team (LTC Strike Team) to host a series of statewide infection preventionist (IP) bootcamps. Through these efforts, ARC IPC has provided training to over 225 health care professionals working in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, and rehabilitation centers.

### The “Now What”

ARC IPC will continue to assess the full scope of IPC needs in Alabama by conducting a needs assessment with various stakeholder groups. Through this, ARC IPC hopes to learn more about the current IPC needs of the public health and health care workforce. However, the number of training needs vastly outnumbers the capacity ARC IPC. The center will continue to provide trainings around “hot topics” and evolving issues in IPC while adding to their online clearinghouse of credible resources and high-quality trainings from other sources.

In addition, ARC IPC has heard from multiple stakeholders that staff turnover is a challenge, and more trained IPs are needed to help meet the needs at facilities. ARC IPC supports the creation of an IP “Academic” certificate that could be offered to students while working on their nursing or public health degrees.

ARC IPC has received numerous comments through webinar evaluations from participants praising the speakers, content, and quality of the trainings. These factors have led to multiple returning participants who consistently attend each of ARC IPC’s webinars.

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Key contributors to this project include Lisa McCormick, University of Alabama at Birmingham; Kaye Melnick, Thresa Dix, Judy Dicks, Kitty Norris, and Kelly Stevens, Alabama Department of Public Health

The work of ARC IPC would not be possible without its partnerships including those within ADPH’s ID&O Division; the Deep South Center for Occupational Health and Safety; Alabama Nursing Home and Long-Term Care Facilities Strike Team; the Alabama Hospital Association; Alabama Region IV Public Health Training Center; Alabama Public Health Training Network; the Lister Hill Center for Health Policy; the Mobile County Health Department; Childcare Resources; and the Jefferson County Department of Health.