

The New Jersey Project Firstline team expands infection prevention and control training



CONTRIBUTOR: Kelly McLaughlin, MPH, MCHES[®], Project Firstline Team Lead, New Jersey Department of Health

CATEGORY: Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)

The New Jersey Department of Health's Project Firstline team strengthened its capacity to prevent infectious disease spread and antimicrobial-resistant infections in healthcare settings throughout the state by expanding training to health care workers and support statewide health care facilities in delivering health equitable education.

The "What"

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven challenging for overall health care infrastructure. The impact on health care-associated infections (HAI) showed a national increase in HAI incidence in 2020, based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Healthcare Safety Network data. The pandemic caused health care professionals and public health professionals to leave the workforce at a high rate due to reasons such as retirement and burnout leading to chronic staffing shortages. Health care facilities in New Jersey are projected to add roughly 64,860 jobs, and account for more than 28% of net job growth in NJ from 2016-2028 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019).



Recognizing this trend, the New Jersey Department of Health's (NJDOH) Project Firstline team has identified the need to expand IPC training to a diverse health care workforce and support statewide health care facilities in delivering health equitable education.

The NJDOH Communicable Disease Service used Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) funding to hire three health educators, two health data specialists, and one infection control specialist to rollout Project Firstline throughout the state. The team built partnerships with academic institutions, professional health care organizations, other NJDOH programs, and other Project Firstline teams across the country.

The Project Firstline team and other professional health care organizations have provided virtual and in-person infection prevention and control (IPC) training in health care facilities throughout the state using multiple training modalities, including Train-the-Trainer. In response to the need to support the future health care and allied health workforce, Project Firstline implements the New Jersey College Tour training initiative to introduce and expand HAI knowledge. At the conclusion of the series, students received a certificate of completion documenting professional development to prospective employers.



More stories are available at stories.cste.org

SUBMITTED JUNE 2023

As of April 2023, the NJDOH Project Firstline team has facilitated 57 IPC trainings and trained over 3,618 NJ health care workers across 12 different workplace settings. Project Firstline partners have also conducted an additional 197 trainings for over 8,707 attendees.

The “So What”

As of April 2023, the NJDOH Project Firstline team has facilitated 57 IPC trainings and trained over 3,618 NJ health care workers across 12 different workplace settings. Project Firstline partners have also conducted additional trainings across various health care facilities.

The “Now What”

The need and demand for IPC education will continue to follow the COVID-19 pandemic through an evident increase in health care and public health workers leaving the workforce, increase in HAIs and antibiotic resistance (AR), and reemergence of pathogens impacting at-risk populations. NJDOH Project Firstline is unique in its IPC programming in that trainings are delivered based on the learning needs of the health care workforce.

The team will continue to invest in translation of educational material in various languages, along with open captioning for participants. NJDOH will continue to partner internally and aims to maintain our partnerships throughout the state and nation to

This has included 133 trainings to 5,890 attendees (2021-2022 funding period) and 62 trainings to 2,817 attendees (to date during the 2022-2023 funding period).

The additional training opportunities that have been offered by partners include: Infection Preventionist Control Officer (IPCO) online training course to facility staff members to help certify more infection preventionists; Rutgers University Project Echo virtual and in-person educational sessions on topics such as Developing an Effective IPC Program, Maintaining Infection Control at all Levels of Care, and Delivering Safe & Equitable Service and Care to Patients and Families; and Train-the-Trainer for local health department staff.

All trainings are required to incorporate some aspect of training to health care professionals on how to address implicit (unconscious) bias in health care settings which lead to health disparities. In addition, NJDOH Project Firstline has been able to provide trainings, with direct Spanish translation to support the live in-person instruction.

continue to support, monitor trends in IPC education needs, and leverage resources to continue to educate frontline healthcare workers.

NJDOH and partners are planning an end-of-year IPC training forum, where IPC training demonstrations will be offered in a centralized location. Demonstrations will include topics such as donning and doffing personal protective equipment, handwashing, and more, as well as offering some more advanced training modules, in honor of Infection Prevention Month. This will offer a comprehensive one-day training forum to address IPC training needs and can be presented annually to achieve sustainability.

Key contributors to this project include Rebecca Greeley, New Jersey Department of Health, and the New Jersey Project Firstline Team.