

Public Health Inspector Referral Final

Provincial Population & Public Health SOP

Clinical Communicable Disease Control, Population and Public Health

Date approved: November 21, 2024

Deadline for next review: November, 2027

Document history: New

1. Abbreviations

CD	Communicable Disease
CD Coordinator	Communicable Disease Coordinator
IP&C	Infection Prevention and Control
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
PHI	Public Health Inspector
PHIMS	Public Health Information Management System
PHN	Public Health Nurse
RHA	Regional Health Authority
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

2. Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to provide guidance to regional Public Health Nurses (PHNs) for completion of referrals to the Manitoba Health Protection Unit for Public Health Inspector notification and support with Communicable Disease (CD) investigations.

3. Scope

This SOP applies to PHNs when completing reportable CD investigations in which exposures/acquisition events (e.g. foodborne, waterborne, animal and/or other) may have occurred in public venues or during a public or semi-public event within Manitoba that require public health inspection.

This SOP will most commonly pertain to enteric infections* which require public health inspector notification and are reportable under *The Public Health Act- Reporting of Diseases and Conditions Regulation*.¹

Other reportable communicable diseases may require Public Health Inspector (PHI) notification depending on the type and/or extent of environmental exposures that occurred. Consultation with a CD Coordinator and/or Medical Officer of Health (MOH) is recommended to determine if a referral is required. Examples of some of these diseases include:

- [Cyclosporiasis](#) (*Cyclospora*)
- [Hantavirus](#) (*Bunyaviridae*)
- [Legionellosis](#) (*Legionella*)
- [Tularemia](#) (*Francisella tularensis*)

This SOP does not pertain to the procedures for reporting or managing CD outbreaks in which more urgent notification to PHIs may be required as part of an outbreak response. Refer to the [Manitoba Health Enteric Illness Protocol](#)

* **Enteric illness (or Enteric infection):** refers to gastrointestinal illnesses that result from ingestion of bacteria, viruses or other parasitic micro-organisms that may be linked to food, water, animals, or an infected person. Symptoms during these illnesses often include vomiting and/or diarrhea.

4. Background

The control and management of reportable CDs is a function of public health as per roles, authority, and functions defined in the Manitoba *Public Health Act*.² CDs can cause illnesses that may result in public harm if appropriate public health interventions that mitigate further transmission are not implemented. Collaboration among public health professionals such as Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C), MOHs, PHNs, CD Coordinators and PHIs within each region is integral to the management of CD investigations and to assist in preventing and identifying outbreaks.

5. Procedures

Within each regional health authority, PHN's are responsible for completing an investigation and implementing public health measures for CDs that have been reported

to their Regional Health Authority (RHA). PHIs also have a responsibility to complete an investigation for cases reported to them that may be linked to exposures in public facilities or venues by conducting onsite inspections and implementing public health interventions.

5.1. Roles and Responsibilities of PHNs and PHIs

An important part of the investigation of CDs is to identify the potential source of the infection. This can help to determine the chain of transmission and how it can be interrupted to prevent further transmission or harm to others.

5.1.1 Public Health Nurses (PHNs)

PHNs interview the case to collect all the key data elements that are specific to the disease. The collection of the information assists to identify any concerns or risks that require public health interventions. When investigating diseases, it is important to assess for all possible sources of exposure based on how the disease is transmitted. Foodborne, waterborne, and animal exposures are common potential sources of communicable diseases, especially enteric diseases. Infected food handlers can also be a source of transmission through contamination of the food that they are preparing for others. Exposure to these sources can occur at home, or at public events or venues. Once potential sources are identified, preventative strategies such as education on disease transmission, food storage and handling, food recalls, hygiene recommendations, and exclusion of infected cases or symptomatic contacts from working in high-risk environments (e.g., food handlers, health care workers) can be implemented to reduce the risk of exposure to other individuals.

5.1.2 Public Health Inspectors (PHIs)

PHIs are assigned to community areas or districts within urban and rural areas throughout Manitoba to respond to environmental health concerns by investigating complaints, and routinely inspecting premises to ensure compliance with regulations in the Public Health Act. They safeguard the well being of both the public and the environment by educating people about public health issues, monitoring facilities and developments, and enforcing public health legislation. Their role is also to ensure safety of all food that is sold and distributed through food venues and conduct inspections of public eating/food handling establishments on both a routine and complaint basis. Food handling establishments are inspected to ensure compliance with the *Food and Food Handling Establishments Regulation*.³ Any facility or location where food is prepared, stored, or served to the general public is considered a food handling establishment. Inspection and testing of recreational water sources such as swimming pools,

whirlpools/hot tubs, are also completed by PHIs.⁴ Other sources of exposure such as petting zoos or public venues in which there is direct contact to animals and their environments, may be inspected if any concerns identified. Once sources of concern have been identified, PHIs have the authority to implement public health measures to prevent further exposures to others, such as sanitation and/or hygiene practice recommendations, equipment repairs/replacement, exclusion of symptomatic food handlers, or closures of public venues. Depending on the type and location of the exposure, consultations or referrals to other organizations such as Manitoba Agriculture, Office of Drinking Water, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and/or the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) may also be required to assist in the investigation and/or to implement public health measures.

5.2. Reporting to PHIs

5.2.1. Information Sharing between Regional Public Health and PHIs

Public Health Inspectors are within the Health Protection Unit of the Environmental Health Branch which is part of the Public Health Division within Manitoba Health. The *Information Sharing Regulation*⁵ under *The Public Health Act* clearly enables MOHs and PHNs to disclose personal health information to PHIs. Information disclosed under this regulation must be limited to the minimum amount necessary to accomplish the purpose for which it is disclosed.

5.2.2. Public Health Inspector Referral

Once a PHN identifies an exposure that may have occurred in a public or semi-public venue or event (e.g., foodborne, waterborne, or animal exposures), a referral to a PHI should be initiated using the [Public Health Inspector Referral form](#).

The following steps are required in the referral process:

- Advise the case that a PHI will be notified due to the potential exposure in a public or semi-public venue or event and may contact the client if further information is required.
- Complete the Public Health Inspector Referral form outlining all public or semi public foodborne, waterborne, animal, or other environmental exposures that were identified in the case's incubation (acquisition) period.
- Include any additional relevant information as a summary on the PHI Referral form. A copy of the relevant sections of the PHIMS case investigation can also be provided to the PHI if required.

- Fax the following information to the **Manitoba Health, Health Protection Unit at 204-948-3727**:
 - Public Health Inspector Referral form
 - Food Recall Questionnaire (if applicable)

Once faxed, upload a copy of the PHI Referral form as a context document into the PHIMS case investigation. Author a note that a referral to the Health Protection Unit has been made and a copy of the PHI referral has been added as a context document. (Ensure a copy of the food recall questionnaire (if applicable) has also been added as a context document to the case investigation). Referrals to PHIs are received centrally at the Manitoba Health Protection Unit in Winnipeg, and then assigned to the PHI based on the location of where the exposure occurred (i.e., address of the food establishment).

When the PHI receives the referral, they will determine if an inspection is required. If they require further information, they may contact the PHN that submitted the referral and/or the case directly.

If an investigation has been completed, the PHI may contact the reporting PHN and/or the regional CD Coordinator/MOH to advise if there are any significant concerns or if there are multiple cases that are associated with the public venue or event. PHN's should consult with their regional CD Coordinator if significant concerns or multiple cases are noted. A copy of the inspection report may also be requested if needed by the regional CD Coordinator/MOH to be added to the individual case investigation or to the outbreak investigation as a context document in PHIMS.

If you have any questions or would like to contact the PHI assigned, you can send an email to healthprotection@gov.mb.ca. Contact numbers for PHI offices are also available at the bottom of the form found in the link below:

<https://forms.gov.mb.ca/cmphi/>

6. Validation and References

1. The Public Health Act- C.C.S.M. cP210 Reporting of Diseases and Conditions accessible at: https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=37/2009
2. The Public Health Act, C.C.S.M. cP210 accessible at: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p210.php?lang=en#86>
3. The Public Health Act, C.C.S.M. cP210- Food and Food Handling Establishments Regulation accessible at: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/339-88r.php>

4. Manitoba Health Protection Unit- Recreational Water Safety accessible at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/protection/pool.html>
5. The Public Health Act, C.C.S.M. cP210- Information Sharing Regulation accessible at: https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=30/2009

7.0 Additional Resources

Enteric, Food and Waterborne Diseases Questionnaires

Disease specific questionnaires are located on the Epi and Surveillance website:

www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/forms.html

General Communicable Disease Investigation Form

www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/mhsu_0002.pdf

Manitoba Health Communicable Disease Protocols

www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/index.html

Manitoba Health Enteric Illness Protocol

www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/enteric.html

Manitoba Health Protection Unit

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/protection/index.html>