

Background

The ability to quickly detect and respond to infectious diseases depends on having a strong infrastructure in place. Infrastructure is the foundation for planning, delivering, and evaluating public health.

State health agencies require effective and efficient systems for preventing infectious disease morbidity and mortality, ensuring control of outbreaks and vigilance against diminishing diseases, and preventing and responding to reemerging and emerging infectious disease threats.

ASTHO is undertaking efforts to increase awareness of and support for state health agencies' critical infectious disease (ID) infrastructure programs.

Purpose

Develop a communications plan and toolkit to be used to articulate the importance and concrete benefit of infectious disease infrastructure activities.

Ideally, communications can help:

- Increase understanding and support amongst key decision makers of the importance of the issue; and
- Drive demand in communities to have the structure in place to prevent, prepare and respond to outbreaks.

ASTHO contracted with Porter Novelli to perform the activities and develop materials for this project.

Additional ASTHO Materials Available

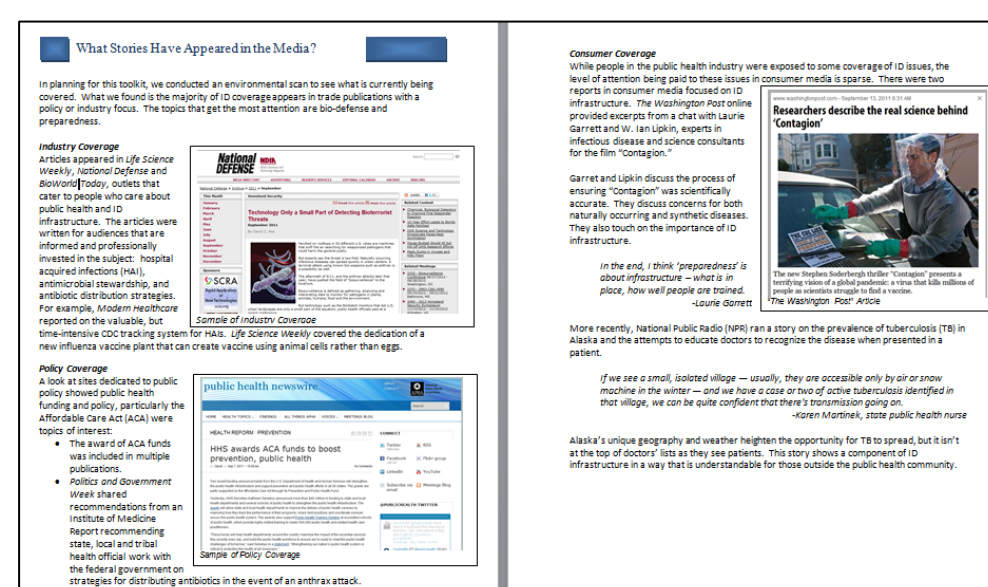
- **Fact Sheet:** Infectious Disease Infrastructure
- **Fact Sheet:** Immunization Infrastructure
- **Fact Sheet:** Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Diseases Program
- **Fact Sheet:** Emerging Infections Programs (EIP)

available at www.astho.org

Environmental Scan

A first step in creating a plan for communication is an assessment of what has been created to tell the story and what has already been said on the topic.

- search mainstream and trade media
- review relevant published materials



Findings: The majority of ID infrastructure coverage appears in trade publications with a policy or industry focus. The topics that get the most attention are bio-defense and preparedness.

Strategy Summit

A strategy summit builds on the learning from the environmental scan and moves the team to thinking about the core components of a successful marketing and communications plan.

- Communications objectives
- Target audiences and outcomes
- Communications strategies and tactics
- Additional research needs

Audience	Desired Outcome	What We Can Do
Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Business • Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased interest in public health ID infrastructure as a topic • Increased coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop positive relationship with media professionals so they are calling to get the public health perspective on stories that could promote the ID infrastructure needs • Use positive tone in articles related to public health coverage

Communications Plan

The internal communications plan contains the details of the goals, objectives, audiences, strategies and tactics.

The main strategy focuses on building capacity – through the development of a toolkit – to talk about the needs in states for investing in infectious disease infrastructure.

Communications Toolkit

The toolkit is designed to assist state health agency staff in telling their story, with a focus on reaching the media as a channel to educate and engage key audiences. It includes:

- information on how the media works and the advantages of each type
- tools used to share stories with journalists
- templates and samples of tools
- message platform for some starting language

Core message:

Infectious disease (ID) infrastructure is the term for the systems in place to guard the nation against emerging and known infectious diseases, which are among the leading causes of death and illness in the United States. This infrastructure enables communities to prepare for, identify and respond to current and future threats.

Media Tool	Sample in Toolkit
Media Release	Foundation Invests in the Future Health of Central Georgia
Media Advisory	Health Advocates Rally on the Steps of the Capitol Building
Opinion Editorial	Public Health System: Our Silent Protector is Grossly Under-Supported

Next Steps

The toolkit will be provided to state health agency staff, who have the ability to supplement the conversation with local stories and examples. Working with their organization's PIO, they can promote awareness and education of their state or community's ID infrastructure.

Infrastructure Topics and Key Points

ASTHO staff have held discussions with representatives from several states to glean stories and examples to include in communications about ID infrastructure. Examples specific to a jurisdiction can be used to educate stakeholders about the value of infrastructure, the impact of funding cuts, and the need for adequate capacity in state health agencies.

Infrastructure and Capacity

- The role of federal funds supporting infrastructure is vital.
- There is a reduced capacity to respond if strain is put on the system (e.g. lose one position, multiple outbreaks).

ELC Funding

- Electronic data collection and reporting are important funded activities.
- Without adequate support, it is hard to keep up with lab samples, testing, & reporting results.

Hepatitis

- Funding is used for outreach, education, and messaging.
- There is very little funding for surveillance or for testing (may have outreach but be unable to test).
- Perinatal hepatitis B vaccination needs more support.
- State hepatitis programs collaborate with HIV/STI programs.

Tuberculosis

- There is a need for public health to manage cases (DOT, followup) to prevent spread of disease.
- Due to funding uncertainty, states may not be able to provide testing/treatment; the decrease in cases may not be sustained.
- To optimally address tuberculosis, states need to be able to do more advanced testing.

Antimicrobial Resistance

- Resistance is a problem – providers are requesting information.
- States need adequate resources to perform surveillance and analyze data.

Contact Information

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