NC Communicable Disease Law

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Legal Framework for CD Control

- *Detection* of communicable diseases or conditions within a population
- *Investigation* of cases and outbreaks by public health officials
- *Communicable disease control measures* to prevent or contain the spread of disease
- *Legal remedies* to enforce communicable disease laws
- *Confidentiality* of communicable disease information
PUBLIC HEALTH LEGAL AUTHORITY

State Law

• Source of authority: police power
• Both local and state public health officials have legal authority in NC
• Comprehensive approach to communicable disease control
  – Preparedness
  – Prevention: immunizations, environmental health
  – Detection: surveillance, reporting, access to records
  – Control: disease-specific control measures, potentially including isolation or quarantine
  – Enforcement
NC Communicable Disease Statutes

- Enacted by NC General Assembly
- G.S. Chapter 130A, Article 6
  - Citation example: G.S. 130A-135
  - On-line at www.ncleg.net (click on link to General Statutes)
- Require CD reporting, authorize CD control measures, provide due process protections for persons isolated or quarantined, address confidentiality and informed consent, provide methods for enforcing CD laws

NC Communicable Disease Rules

- Adopted by NC Commission for Public Health
- NC Administrative Code, Title 10A, Subchapter 41A
  - Citation example: 10A NCAC 41A.0101
  - On-line at http://reports.oah.state.nc.us/ncac.asp
- Establish reportable diseases and specific control measures, provide procedures for bloodborne pathogen exposures, address HIV testing
- Also immunization schedule and immunization info-sharing rules
NC Court Decisions

- Law made by judges
- State courts: NC Court of Appeals, NC Supreme Court
- Federal courts: 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, US Supreme Court
- NC court decisions have upheld:
  - mandatory HIV reporting – *Act-Up Triangle v. Commission*
  - immunization requirements – *State v. Hay; In re Stratton*
  - authority to enforce CD laws – *Act-Up Triangle v. Commission*

Roles: State & Local

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NC Division of Public Health</th>
<th>Local Public Health Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• State health director</td>
<td>• Local health director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• State epidemiologist</td>
<td>• Communicable disease nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicable Disease</td>
<td>• Clinical staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch</td>
<td>• Environmental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicable disease</td>
<td>specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consultants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Disease investigation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>specialists</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• State Laboratory of Public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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Federal Law

- Source of authority: interstate commerce clause (more limited than police power)
- Specific issues:
  - Preparedness
  - Assistance to states
  - Prevent introduction of disease into US
  - Prevent or control interstate spread

Confidentiality: Basic Principles

**HIPAA**
- Allows disclosures *required* by state law
- Allows disclosures *permitted* by state law for certain public health purposes

**State PH laws**
- **Requires** certain disclosures: mandatory reports; access to records in outbreaks
- **Permits** certain voluntary reports
- **Protects** communicable disease information obtained by public health by limiting uses and re-disclosure

**Other laws**
- Be aware that while HIPAA and state public health laws support access to information for communicable disease activities, other laws may inhibit access
### KEY LEGAL ISSUES IN COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL

#### Reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Voluntary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Routine – physicians and certain others are required by law to routinely report specified diseases &amp; conditions</td>
<td>• Routine – health care facilities are allowed (but not required) to report the same diseases/conditions that physicians are required to report</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Non-routine – health care providers may be required to temporarily report symptoms, diseases, conditions, trends in use of services, or other information in response to state health director’s order (not to exceed 90 days)</td>
<td>• Non-routine – health care providers are allowed to report unusual types or numbers of symptoms, illnesses, trends in health care visits, trends in prescriptions, or other events that could indicate a health condition caused by nuclear, chemical, or biological terrorism</td>
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# TEMPORARY ORDER

**MIDDLE EAST RESPIRATORY SYNDROME CORONAVIRUS (MERS-CoV) INFECTION**

Pursuant to G.S. 130A-141.1, the State Health Director hereby issues a TEMPORARY ORDER requiring physicians licensed to practice medicine in this State and laboratories operating in this State to report suspected or confirmed MERS-CoV infections. This order is based upon a finding that reports of MERS-CoV infection are necessary for surveillance of a communicable disease that presents a danger to the public health. The report is required to be made immediately when MERS-CoV infection is reasonably suspected to exist. The physician shall make the report to the local health director of the county or district in which the patient resides. The local health director shall immediately report the infection to the Division of Public Health. The laboratory shall make the report directly to the Division of Public Health. This order is effective June 23, 2014 and expires in 90 days.

![Signature]

Robin Cunningham, M.D.
State Health Director

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>What to report, when, &amp; to whom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physicians</strong> GS 130A-135</td>
<td>• 70+ diseases/conditions listed in 10A NCAC 41A.0101(a)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Time frame varies from immediately to within 7 days</td>
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<td>• Report to local health director (via NCEDDS)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Schools/Child day care</strong> GS 130A-136</td>
<td>• 70+ diseases/conditions (10A NCAC 41A.0101(a); schools subject to FERPA may report if health/safety emergency)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time frame varies from immediately to within 7 days</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Report to local health director</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food/drink establishments</strong> GS 130A-138</td>
<td>• Foodborne illnesses specified in 10A NCAC 41A.0102(b) if:</td>
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<td>• Suspected case in employee, or</td>
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<td>• Suspected outbreak in customers or employees</td>
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<td>• Report within 24 hours to local health director</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Laboratories</strong> GS 130A-139</td>
<td>• Positive tests as specified in 10A NCAC 41A.0101(c)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Time frames vary, see 10A NCAC 41A.0102(d)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Report to local or state officials as specified in 10A NCAC 41A.0102(d)</td>
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Confidentiality: Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting

- HIPAA allows reports to public health that are either required or permitted by state law; everything discussed in this section is either required or permitted
- State laws provide immunity from liability for disclosures of information made in accordance with mandatory and voluntary reporting laws
- A state communicable disease confidentiality law (G.S. 130A-143) limits public health officials’ redisclosure of information that is reported

Investigations: Obtaining Records

G.S. 130A-144(b) requires health care providers to give local or state public health officials access to:
- Records pertaining to a mandatory or voluntary report
- Records the public health official determines are relevant to an investigation of a case or outbreak of a communicable disease or condition

G.S. 130A-476(c) requires health care providers to give local or state public health officials access to:
- Records the public health official determines are relevant to a report or an investigation of a case or outbreak of a health condition that may have been caused by nuclear, chemical, or biological terrorism
Confidentiality: Records Obtained in Investigations

✔ HIPAA allows disclosures to public health that are required by state law; G.S. 130A-144(b) and 130A-476(c) are laws requiring disclosure
✔ G.S. 130A-144(c) and 130A-476(d) provide immunity from liability for disclosures of information made in accordance with these laws
✔ G.S. 130A-143 and/or 130A-476(e) limits public health officials’ redisclosure of information that is obtained in an investigation

Control Measures: General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G.S. 130A-144</th>
<th>10A NCAC 41A.0201 - .0214</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Authorizes Commission for Public Health to adopt rules prescribing control measures</td>
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<td>• Requires all persons to comply with control measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prescribes control measures for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, STDs, tuberculosis, smallpox/vaccinia, and SARS</td>
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<td>• For all other CDs, state rules incorporate control measures specified in:</td>
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<td>• CDC guidelines &amp; recommended actions, or</td>
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<tr>
<td>• APHA’s Control of Communicable Diseases Manual</td>
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Control Measures: Isolation & Quarantine (NC law)

• How are isolation & quarantine defined and what distinguishes them?
• Who may order?
• How long does an order last?
• How can it be enforced?

Isolation & Quarantine (NC law)

Isolation
• Limit on freedom of movement or freedom of action of a person infected (or suspected of being infected)

Quarantine
• Limit on freedom of movement or freedom of action of a person exposed (or suspected of being exposed)
• Limit on access to an area contaminated with infectious agent
• Limit on freedom of movement or action of an unimmunized person
Isolation & Quarantine (NC law)

• Who may order?
  – Local health director or state health director

• How long does order last?
  – Limits on freedom of action:
    • So long as public health endangered, no other limits in law
  – Limits on freedom of movement or access:
    • So long as public health is endangered but with a maximum of 30 days for initial order
    • If public health still endangered when order expires, may be extended by a Superior Court judge

Isolation & Quarantine (Federal law)

United States Code
• Authorizes federal officials to control movement of persons to prevent spread of disease
• Provides penalties for violations
• Directs federal officials to assist states and local governments
• Provides for care and treatment of detained persons

Code of Federal Regulations
• Authorizes CDC director to intervene when local action inadequate
• Prohibits individuals with certain CDs from traveling interstate without permission
• Authorizes CDC director to detain, isolate, or quarantine persons with CDs named by president in executive order
Isolation & Quarantine (Federal law)

Executive orders specify CDs subject to federal detention, isolation, or quarantine:

- Cholera
- Diphtheria
- Infectious TB
- Plague
- Smallpox
- Yellow fever

- Viral hemorrhagic fevers
- Severe acute respiratory syndromes
- Flu viruses likely to cause pandemic

Executive orders 13295 (2003); 13375 (2005); 13674 (2014)

Control Measures: Emerging Illnesses

- In emerging illness, the CDC is likely to be the source of control measures and they may evolve as understanding of the illness develops.

- Example: 2009 H1N1 outbreak
  - At outset, CDC guidance advised school closure if any student or staff member had flu.
  - Very early in outbreak, guidance modified – school closures still occurred for operational reasons but not as a control measure.
# How do bloodborne pathogen exposures occur?

## Occupational exposure
- A health care worker experiences a needlestick.
- A law enforcement officer is bitten by a person who is under arrest.

## Non-occupational (community) exposure
- A child finds a used syringe & needle in a public park and pricks her finger.
- There is an altercation that ends up with one person exposed to the another’s blood.

# Control Measures: Bloodborne Pathogens

## Source of law depends on type of exposure
- Occupational: OSHA bloodborne pathogen standards
- Non-occupational (community): NC control measure rules for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C

## Common threads in OSHA standards & NC rules
- Exposure: needlestick or contact between blood/body fluid and mucous membrane or nonintact skin
- Post-exposure evaluation and follow-up: may include testing, prophylaxis, disclosures of information
- Universal application
2013 Measles Outbreak, NC
### Immunizations: Children

**G.S. 130A-153**
- Every child present in NC must be immunized against specific diseases.
- Parents/guardians responsible for making sure child is immunized.

**10A NCAC 41A.0401**
- Required immunizations and schedule for getting them set forth in state regulations.

### Immunization: Children – Exemptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical (G.S. 130A-156)</th>
<th>Religious (G.S. 130A-157)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Child exempt from immunization requirements when an immunization is medically contraindicated.</td>
<td>• Child exempt when the bona fide religious beliefs of the parent or guardian are contrary to immunization requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Physician must certify the medical contraindication.</td>
<td>• Parent writes a statement of religious objection for each child for whom exemption claimed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contraindication must be recognized by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).</td>
<td>• <strong>No exemption</strong> for objection based on a belief that is not religious in nature.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**Immunizations: Health Care Workers**

**Required by State Law**
- Nursing homes
  - Influenza
  - Exemptions: medical, religious, informed refusal
    - G.S. 131E-113
- Adult care homes
  - Influenza
  - Exemptions: medical, religious, informed refusal
    - G.S. 131D-9

**Required by Employers**
- Employers establish specific requirements
- Must reasonably accommodate:
  - ADA disabilities that preclude vaccination
  - Sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance

**Enforcement**
- While any violation of NC communicable disease laws may be enforced using civil or criminal legal remedies, those remedies are most commonly used for violations of control measures.
- Seek compliance through education first.
- Issue written orders as appropriate.
- Document evidence of noncompliance.
- Seek assistance of an attorney.
More information

**Bloodborne Pathogens**
- Blog Post: UPDATED: Blood Exposures and NC Communicable Disease Law (September 2016)

**Communicable Disease Law, Generally**
- Blog Post: Keeping the Public Informed About Communicable Disease (May 2015)
- Blog Post: How Does North Carolina Law Address Outbreaks of Communicable Disease? (September 2014)

**Immunizations**
- Blog Post: May Unimmunized Children be Excluded from School in North Carolina? (January 2015)
- Blog Post: Flu Vaccines for Health Care Workers (October 2010)

**Isolation & Quarantine**
- Blog Post: Ebola and the Law of Isolation and Quarantine in North Carolina (October 2014)
- The North Carolina Public Health System’s Isolation and Quarantine Authority, by Jill Moore, Health Law Bulletin No. 84 (July 2006)

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