What to Expect During an Outbreak

When 2 or more cases of the same illness occur close in time with a common exposure the local health department should be notified via telephone as soon as possible.

1. Prior to contacting the local health department (LHD) ensure that facility management staff is aware of the situation. **Allow the proper staff member to contact the LHD.**
   a. Before making the call please have at a minimum:
      i. Demographic information of the ill persons (age, gender, contact information, race, ethnicity, and names (required for ABC diseases). This includes staff and residents if ill (staff should have occupational duties listed)
         1. If an ill staff member has diarrhea and is a food handler, direct patient provider, or works directly with children they MUST leave work and return upon conditions covered under the Ohio Administrative Code 3701-3-13 (http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/3701-3-13). This will vary by disease.
      ii. Illness onset dates
      iii. Any laboratory testing that has already been done. This includes any specimens collected that have not yet been tested. Also, any intervention in place prior to LHD contact.
   b. If the suspected outbreak is thought to be food related, a list of food served is helpful.
      i. Depending on the quickness of reporting and the suspected disease a list of foods requested may date back several days. Leftover food samples are encouraged. The Environmental Health Division of LHD will likely perform an inspection on hygiene, food storage, and preparation.
   c. Knowing an index case is helpful but not crucial. Human specimen collection is likely and encouraged. Contact surface samples are unlikely but may occur.

2. Once the LHD has been contacted the information above will be analyzed. Additional documentation may be required. LHD will determine if an outbreak is occurring.
   a. If the suspected outbreak is thought to be food related, a list of food served is helpful.
      i. Depending on the quickness of reporting and the suspected disease a list of foods requested may date back several days. Leftover food samples are encouraged. The Environmental Health Division of LHD will likely perform an inspection on hygiene, food storage, and preparation.
   b. Knowing an index case is helpful but not crucial. Human specimen collection is likely and encouraged. Contact surface samples are unlikely but may occur.

3. If an outbreak is suspected, LHD staff will contact Ohio Department of Health (ODH)
   a. Nursing homes are to report to the Northwest Ohio Region Division of Quality (419) 245-2840
   b. LHD will be in regular contact via phone, site visits, email, etc.
   c. A final outbreak report is written by the Epidemiologist
      i. The final report WILL NOT mention the names of staff, facility, administration, or patients.
      ii. Final reports ARE public record. If media attention is expected LHD will likely contact your facility for information sharing. The Health Commissioner will likely handle all media inquiries.

4. An After Action Report (AAR) may be performed.
   a. AARs usually do not occur unless there is a need i.e. non-compliance, lag in reporting, communication issues.
   b. The AAR process is beneficial to help future outbreak investigations.
      i. Your facility’s involvement in the AAR is voluntary and may or may not be requested. Improvement Plans (IP) are done alongside AARs and help target areas where improvement is needed (this will not mention any names of facility, staff, patients, administration)