

Richard Whitley, M.S.
Administrator

Mary Guinan, M.D., PhD
State Health Officer



Contact Name: Martha Framsted
Phone Number: 775-684-4014
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NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION
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**NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION TAKING AGGRESSIVE
APPROACH TO PREVENT INFECTIONS in HEALTH CARE FACILITIES**

Carson City – The Nevada State Health Division has embarked on a proactive and multi-pronged approach to reduce health care acquired infections in Nevada’s health facilities. Following the discovery last year of a hepatitis C outbreak in Southern Nevada that was linked to unsafe injection practices at an ambulatory surgery center, the Health Division did special inspections of all ambulatory care facilities in Nevada. These special surveys focused on infection control practices of facilities and health care providers in those facilities. Any deficiencies found were required to be corrected within a short time frame. These series of inspections were successful in improving infection control practices at these facilities.

To ensure continued compliance with safe practices, the Bureau of Health Care Quality and Compliance was restructured under the direction of Marla McDade Williams to be able to perform annual infection focused surveys at all ambulatory health care facilities. The Bureau hired specialists who developed a data collection instrument for the infection focused surveys. These data will become part of the annual report of the Bureau and will constitute both a surveillance system for infection control practices and an evaluation tool that will determine how effective these surveys will be in ensuring continued safe infection control practices in facilities.

State Health Officer, Dr. Mary Guinan said the agency will use the surveillance tool to spot unsafe practices and stop them before they become a threat to patient’s health. “We will have the ability to intervene to stop unsafe practices and a continual monitoring system for compliance,” she said.

The Bureau has also moved forward with a plan to fully staff the agency, ensuring an adequate number of health facilities surveyors are available to conduct these important assessments. The Bureau is almost fully staffed and has published its first draft report, which can be accessed at http://health.nv.gov/PUBLICATIONS/ASC/2008_ASC_AnnualReport.pdf.

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Richard Whitley, Administrator

4150 Technology Way, Suite 300, Carson City, Nevada 89706
Phone (775) 684-4200, Fax (775) 684-4211
NEVADA STATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is also reacting to the need to stop serious infection outbreaks, announcing earlier this month a plan to increase the frequency of inspections at ambulatory surgical centers nationwide using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The new infection control survey tool, developed in consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Nevada State Health Division and local public health workers, will be used in the survey process. The funding will allow states, including Nevada, to hire additional surveyors to increase the quality, time, and number of these inspections.

As part of the Health Division's mission to control and eliminate the spread of infectious disease, the agency has added a whole section on this important topic, both for health care professionals and the general public, to its website at: http://health.nv.gov/HCQC_InfectionPreventionControl.htm. Included is an on-line training program for health professionals titled, "Nevada: Making Unsafe Injection Practices a 'Never' Event."

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