## MANDATORY REPORTING OF HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS (HAI)

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides policy and guidance for mandatory reporting of healthcare-associated infections (HAI) to non-Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) government entities.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- a. HAIs are infections that patients acquire during the course of receiving treatment for other conditions within a health care setting. Over the last several months, consumers have felt strongly that public reporting of HAIs would be of benefit to their communities. In that light, there are currently several states that have mandatory reporting rules for a HAI, and approximately 20 states have such regulations moving through their legislature. In most of the remaining states, there appears to be an interest in moving in that direction. Issues for VA are many, but include disparate laws based on each states' lawmaking, enabling legislation that does not deal directly with implementation strategies that may change over time, lack of any universal methodology for assessing HAIs or reporting, VA privacy rules, and uncertainty about the use of such reported information. While VA may not be obligated to follow states' laws regarding such mandatory reporting, there are implications for both reporting and not reporting that should be considered. A clear and coherent policy across the country would be useful at both Central Office and field levels. One is being developed as part of VHA's health care associated infection and influenza surveillance systems. In the spring of 2005, the Deputy Patient Care Service Officer requested that the national VA Program Director for Infectious Diseases convene a healthcare-associated infections work group to review the issue of mandatory reporting of HAIs. This Directive is an outcome of that group's deliberations.
- b. It must be noted, however, that this Directive applies to mandatory reporting for HAIs only. This does not apply to reporting communicable diseases, (e.g., meningitis, plague, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases) to local health authorities as has been the case for VA over many years. Such reporting to local health authorities has been supported by VA and should continue as defined by VA rules and regulations. The policy defined in this Directive relates only to HAI.
- **3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy not to provide reporting data for HAI to local health authorities. It is VHA policy to continue to report communicable diseases to local health authorities.

## 4. ACTION

a. **Facility Director.** The facility Director is responsible for ensuring:

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- (1) Oversight for interactions with local health authorities;
- (2) A general moratorium is employed for mandatory reporting of HAI to local health authorities; and
- a. Continue to report communicable diseases to local health authorities consistent with VA rules and regulations.
- b. <u>Local Facility Management.</u> Local facility management is encouraged to work with local and State officials in developing appropriate HAI definitions, reporting mechanisms, outcome variables, and other clinical and/or administrative components of a reporting system.
- **6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (13) is responsible for the content of this Directive. Questions relating to mandatory reporting of healthcare-associated infections may be referred to the Public Health Strategic Healthcare Group at (202) 273-8567.
- **7. RECISSIONS:** None. This VHA Directive expires April 30, 2011.

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