

Foodborne Illness Complaint Investigation Process

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What's The Issue?

- Late identification of foodborne pathogens delay investigation/response to a suspect outbreak.
- Processes to handle a food illness complaint were isolated within each Center and not routinely coordinated.
- Foodborne outbreak investigations are conducted within both the HP & EH Centers based upon multiple governing regulations.
- Response to complaints delayed due to multi-channel communications coming into WCHD.

Why It's Important

- Provide for coordinated, and timely response to a potential foodborne illness complaint.
- Optimize turnaround time for investigation for both Centers.
- Develop a cross-center assessment tool to identify a suspect pathogen.
- Facilitate communication of mitigation activities with food establishment.

Team Members

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What We Did

- Reviewed the similarities and differences in applicable governing regulations for each Center.
- Created a process flow to identify avenues in which complaints are received by WCHD.
- Updated Foodborne Illness Case History Questionnaire combines the EH and CD versions into a single tool.
- Defined CD & EH roles in a food complaint investigation
- Standardized complaint investigation procedures between Centers by identifying and documenting all critical steps, reducing inconsistencies and streamlining the process.

Lessons Learned

- Cross Center collaborative investigation reduces time of identification of potential pathogen and response.
- Developed and implemented a standardized Food History Questionnaire that integrates both CD & EH data collection needs.
- Identify the need to encourage/provide testing resources to complainant.
- Greater understanding of EH Food Codes in respect to Priority Observations that may cause foodborne illness by the CD Team.

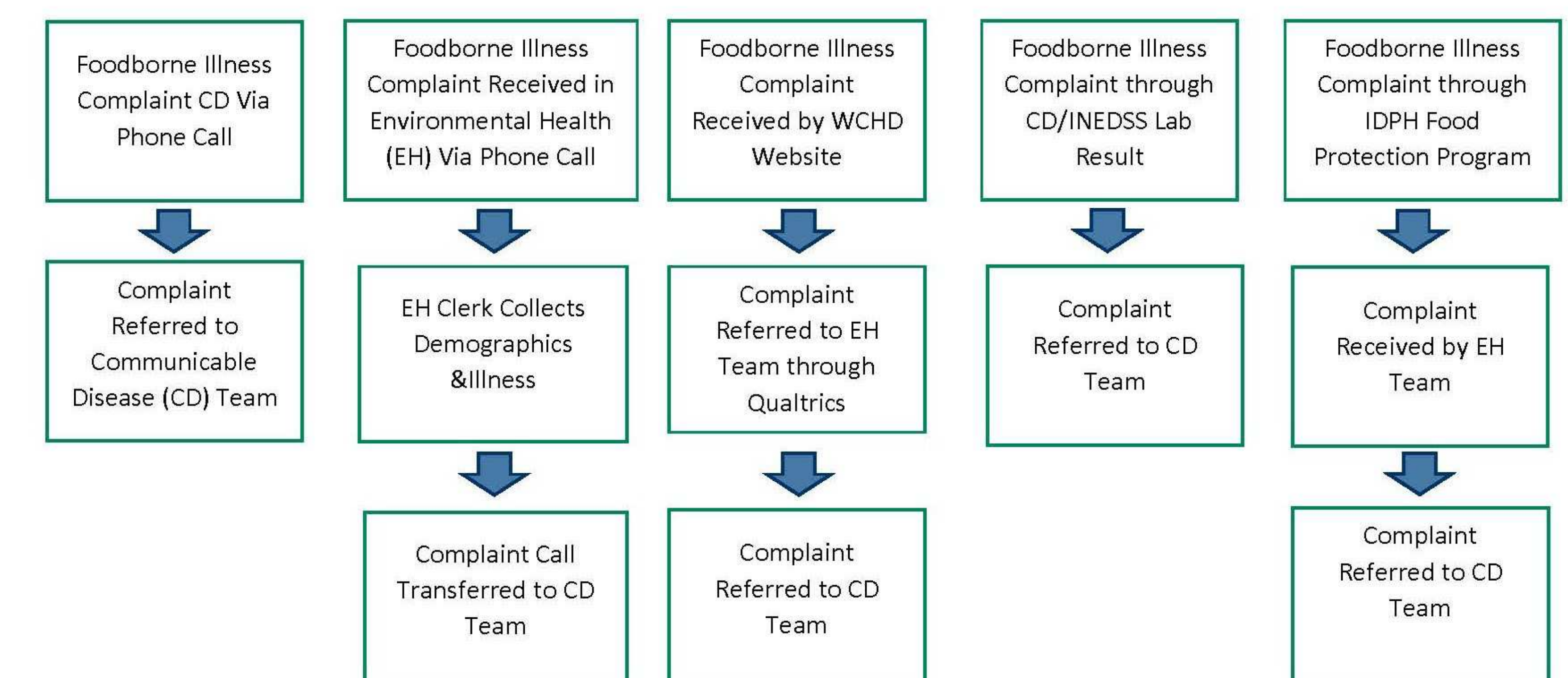
Results

- CD leads the investigation and provides the key information to EH.
- Enhanced the Foodborne Illness Case History Questionnaire to include both CD & EH criteria.
- Implemented a critical step time-tracking system to identify barriers in meeting the 48 hour investigation window
- Identified potential opportunity for ill complainant to receive testing to determine any suspect pathogen

Next Steps

- Analyze the data from the timeline of the critical steps in each investigation to reach completion in 48 hours.
- Determine what modifications might be necessary to the investigation process.

How does WCHD receive a foodborne illness complaint?



Flowchart identifying how a food illness complaint is received at WCHD.