

Implementing Infectious Disease Directives

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On December 2, 1998, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released "HHS Initiatives to Combat Emerging Infectious Diseases." This initiative arose from President Clinton's June 1996 Presidential Decision Directive on Emerging Infectious Diseases. The directive "sets policy and provides for coordination across the federal government in improving domestic and international disease surveillance, prevention, and the response measures."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are at the forefront of the administration's comprehensive strategy. For example, the CDC's updated strategy calls for:

- working in a partnership with states to strengthen surveillance in the US and to establish a coordinated global surveillance network with international partners
- developing new diagnostic tests
- enhancing emergency response capability to investigate and respond to infectious disease outbreaks
- developing and implementing guidelines for the prevention of infectious diseases
- strengthening the public health system by ensuring adequate personnel facilities, equipment, and supplies at the federal, state, and local level
- developing treatment and prevention strategies for targeted populations
- providing necessary training to public health surveillance and laboratory personnel
- targeting research and prevention efforts

According to the report, several key elements of the CDC's strategy have already been implemented. These include:

- establishing physician-based emerging infections sentinel networks (EISNs) to detect outbreaks and monitor emerging infectious disease occurrence
- creating population-based emerging infections programs (EIPs) to conduct surveillance for bacterial diseases, pneumonia, and foodborne diseases
- increasing outreach to healthcare professionals and the public on emerging infectious diseases and drug resistance

The report also indicates several research activities commenced by NIH to fight emerging infectious diseases in addition to the FDA's efforts to "address antibiotic resistance as it relates to new drug approvals."

To review a copy of this fact sheet, you can access the Department of Health and Human Services Web site at <http://www.hhs.gov>.

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