



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

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Patrick J. McConnon, M.P.H.
Executive Director
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
2872 Woodcock Boulevard, Suite 303
Atlanta, Georgia 30341-4015

Dear Mr. McConnon:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists' (CSTE) position statement 04-ID-02 entitled "Disclosing Food Distribution Information to Protect the Public Health." As stated in the position statement, this issue affects the extent and effectiveness of investigations and interventions aimed at preventing foodborne illnesses in outbreak situations.

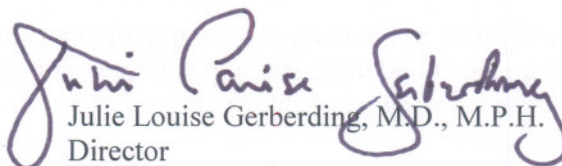
Disclosure of distribution information for food products implicated in foodborne outbreaks can allow quicker determination of potential victims, and geographic areas likely to have high rates of disease can be efficiently targeted for coordination and assistance. Further, having food distribution information available during the preliminary stages of a food-related outbreak investigation may allow for timely and effective public health interventions. For example, public health officials could warn the public about food that may already be in their homes or that may be sold through secondary distributors.

Distribution information also allows investigators to target their efforts to areas of potential high exposure and thereby enhance efficiency and better define the scope and breadth of outbreaks. Cases found outside the areas of distribution may indicate an important alternative source of the contaminated food item.

Thus, food distribution information can play an important role in the investigation of outbreaks and the implementation of public health interventions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes the primary role of federal regulatory partners in the collection and distribution of this type of information and the associated legal limitations of such activities.

CDC will collaborate with CSTE, other public health organizations, and our regulatory partners (the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service) to determine the most effective solution for this issue.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director

cc:
Dr. Duc Vugia