

*epi*TRENDS

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Project Firstline

Project Firstline is among Washington State Department of Health (DOH) initiatives done in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The project's purpose is to provide infection prevention resources for healthcare workers.

Purpose of Project Firstline

Healthcare workers are on the front lines of infection prevention and control. They care for patients with a wide variety of typical communicable conditions. In addition, healthcare workers may encounter a person who is ill with an emerging pathogen, which may be one already identified such as Ebola or an entirely new agent like a novel influenza virus.



Healthcare workers may themselves be at risk of infection; during the initial COVID-19 outbreak, healthcare workers with insufficient personal protective equipment could become infected. In addition, there is a risk that healthcare workers will not become infected but will transmit a pathogen from one vulnerable patient to another, as had occurred with certain healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) including *Clostridioides difficile* (*C. diff*) and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). Lack of practicing infection prevention measures can result in HAIs. About 1 in 31 hospital patients and 1 in 43 nursing home residents acquire at least one HAI when receiving care.

Healthcare settings such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, and in-home services maintain infection prevention measures through their workers. While facilities may provide policies, procedures, and trainings, the responsibility for infection prevention ultimately resides with each healthcare worker. Allied health professionals, nursing assistants, environmental services, nurses, physicians, and others with direct patient contact should be educated in infection prevention knowledge and practices. Project Firstline is intended to support the frontline healthcare worker



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through free, accessible, and concise resources to increase their application of proper infection prevention and control practices on the job.

Training

Project Firstline has goals of reducing infections by:

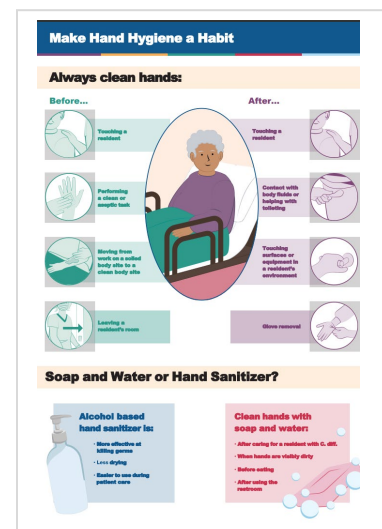
- Ensuring infection prevention becomes part of the healthcare culture to prevent infections
- Supporting Washington healthcare workers to be confident infection control practitioners

To achieve these goals, Project Frontline provides accessible infection control training for frontline healthcare workers. Options include educational and promotional materials, education events, websites, digital media, and subscriptions to newsletters. A [Learning Needs Assessment](#) was conducted by DOH and University of Washington's Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (NWCPHP) to identify the preferred topics and training delivery methods. Results were used to develop materials created by DOH and NWCPHP.

In response to the Learning Needs Assessment, DOH has created online learning modules, a podcast series, and certificate programs. The Project Firstline resources provided by DOH tailor infection prevention and control practices to the individual healthcare worker, accommodating busy schedules and varying learning styles.

The online learning modules are put into the perspective of a frontline healthcare worker in long-term care settings. Each module consists of a short video, interactive scenario, and job aid to assist the learner. These modules are accessible on desktop and mobile devices with the ability to start, stop, and return to the module. Continuing education (DSHS credit hours) and nursing education credits are available upon completion. The modules address:

- Infection control
- How germs can spread on surfaces
- How germs can spread via respiratory droplets
- Proper hand hygiene
- Proper use of personal protective equipment
- Cleaning and disinfecting
- Enhanced barrier precautions
- Injection safety



Healthcare worker job aids are available in multiple languages for each module. The training series and more information can be found at: <https://firstline.nwcphp.org/>

In addition to the online learning modules, DOH has also hosted a [Project Firstline podcast](#) for healthcare workers to increase awareness of infection prevention and public health practices and its impact on the community. Topics range from hand hygiene, multidrug resistant organisms (MDROs), and focus on various healthcare settings to a mini-series on antimicrobial stewardship. [Champion certificates](#) are available to facilities and training programs, recognizing their commitment to infection prevention and control education and training through implementation of Project Firstline resources.

In an effort to increase accessibility and support for healthcare workers, DOH provides an [all-in-one guide](#) to resources. Included are separate sections for construction and facilities, device-associated infections, disease and setting specific guidelines, outbreak investigation, and disease surveillance.

Project Firstline Partners and Resources

Major partners with DOH in Project Firstline include CDC, National Council of Urban Indian Health, Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, and Oregon Nursing Association. The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) is the leading professional association for infection preventionists.

Healthcare facilities can request a facility code number for the Washington Project Firstline eLearning training series. The code can verify the number of workers completing training modules, resulting in recognition as a Frontline Infection Prevention Champion facility.

Infection prevention is critical for protecting both healthcare workers and patients. The spread of healthcare associated infections presents a risk to patients as well as staff. Through training and facility support, healthcare workers can reduce those risks.

Resources

Department of Health: <https://doh.wa.gov/public-health-provider-resources/healthcare-professions-and-facilities/healthcare-associated-infections/hai-resources-and-tools/project-firstline>

DOH Infection Prevention Resources for Healthcare Facilities (all-in-one guide): <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/420267-InfectionPreventionResources.pdf>

DOH podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/user-718826213/sets/pfl>

DOH Champions: <https://doh.wa.gov/public-health-provider-resources/healthcare-professions-and-facilities/healthcare-associated-infections/hai-resources-and-tools/project-firstline/champions>

DOH/UW/NWCPHP learning needs assessment: <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/5300/ProjectFirstlineNARReport.pdf>

Project Firstline training links: <https://firstline.nwcpnp.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/project-firstline/>

CDC materials: <https://www.cdc.gov/project-firstline/hcp/communication-resources/index.html>

