

CDC selects Colorado as food safety center of excellence

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The CDC has named Colorado as one of five Food Safety Centers of Excellence in the nation, Dr. Chris Urbina, executive director and chief medical officer at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, announced Tuesday, Oct. 16.

Colorado was selected through a competitive selection process. This center is a joint effort between the department, the Colorado School of Public Health and Colorado State University. For this first year, Colorado has been awarded \$200,000 to advance this work in food safety.

The other states are Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee and Florida.

The Food Safety Centers of Excellence were created as part of the Food Safety Modernization Act. The goal of the centers is to create partnerships between state health departments, schools of public health and agriculture schools to improve foodborne illness outbreak surveillance and investigations.

Urbina said, "Because of Colorado's extremely rapid case reporting and lab work, we have repeatedly led multistate investigations. We have experience in leading complex investigations and have developed solid partnerships with other state health departments, CDC and regulatory agencies. And with our strong partnerships with Colorado School of Public Health and Colorado State University, we are well-positioned to further advance food safety efforts."

This work, led by disease control experts at the department of health and its state laboratory, helps to reduce the spread of infection through foodborne illness.

In 2010, Colorado selected food safety as one of its 10 Winnable Battles in public and environmental health.

One goal of the Food Safety Modernization Act is to identify best practices that can be implemented to identify outbreaks more quickly and solve them faster. Another is to develop training for students and public health professionals in outbreak detection and response

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Foodborne illnesses cost the United States \$152 billion per year, an average cost of \$1,850 each time someone gets sick from food, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

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