

## **Utilization of an online tool for public health reporting and outbreak investigation**

**AUTHOR(S):** Heather Kaisner, Eric Mone, Channa Lindsay, and Jennifer Faith

**PRESENTATION FORMAT:** Oral Presentation

**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** Public health professionals working in health communication, communicable disease, environmental health, quality improvement, and epidemiology.

**ABSTRACT:** In June 2015, Deschutes County Health Services launched an online tool ([www.deschutes.org/healthconcern](http://www.deschutes.org/healthconcern)) to allow community members to report public health concerns. The tool is designed to provide an additional method of reporting concerns and to reduce the volume of calls to the communicable disease reporting line. Prior to the creation of the tool, there was no internet-based option for public reporting, which likely deterred some reports and limited our agency's data analysis capabilities. We promoted use of the tool through a campaign that included handouts, posters, social media, a phone tree, and press releases. Since its launch, we have received a range of 2 to 18 reports monthly, the majority related to foodborne illness (37%) and restaurant complaints (36%). Although the tool was originally conceptualized as a self-directed avenue for community reporting, we have utilized it in other ways. During a point source outbreak in early 2016, we directed affected individuals to the online tool to provide contact and outbreak-related information. This method saved staff time and streamlined our process of collecting and analyzing outbreak data. We will discuss our use of the tool during this outbreak and highlight potential uses for reporting and outbreak investigation in the future.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** Describe how an online reporting tool was used to collect public health concern and outbreak data.

**PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Heather Kaisner, MS  
Supervisor, Communicable Disease Programs  
Deschutes County Health Services  
Bend, OR  
541-617-4705 | [Heather.Kaisner@deschutes.org](mailto:Heather.Kaisner@deschutes.org)