

## ***Clostridium perfringens* Intoxications Associated with a Prison**

April

Anoka County

On April 11, 2013, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) foodborne illness hotline received a report of gastrointestinal illness among inmates from a prison in Lino Lakes. Anoka County Community Health and Environmental Services (ACCHES) was contacted and an investigation was initiated immediately.

ACCHES sanitarians visited the facility on April 12 to evaluate food preparation and handling procedures. Prison medical staff interviewed inmates about recent illness history. A case was defined as an inmate who developed vomiting or diarrhea ( $\geq 3$  loose stools in a 24-hour period). Stool samples collected from consenting inmates were submitted to the MDH Public Health Laboratory (PHL) for bacterial, viral, and toxin testing.

Twenty-eight inmates met the case definition. Cases primarily occurred in living two living units with attack rates of 100% and 79%. The median incubation period for the cases from lunch on April 10 was 16 hours (range, 11 to 16.5 hours). The median duration of illness was 1 day (range, 1 to 2 days). All 28 cases reported diarrhea and none reported fever, vomiting, or bloody stools. Stool specimens submitted by four ill inmates tested positive for *Clostridium perfringens* enterotoxin A.

Exposure histories were not obtained from inmates. No cases were on special diets. Foods served on April 10 included, sausage gravy with a biscuit for breakfast, beef chow mein with rice and broccoli for lunch, and meat lasagna for dinner. Leftover rice and meat lasagna tested negative for *C. perfringens* at the MDH PHL.

ACCHES sanitarians conducted an environmental assessment at the prison on April 12. Although the kitchen staff stated that there was no hot or cold holding of foods prior to service, several large containers of rice and lasagna each 8 inches deep were found in the walk in cooler. Additionally, HACCP production monitoring forms indicated that the rice served for lunch on April 10 was still at 65° F 4 hours after it was made. Kitchen staff were educated on safe cooling procedures.

This was a foodborne outbreak of *Clostridium perfringens* intoxications associated with a prison. While no vehicle was implicated, the environmental health assessment documented potential temperature abuse of multiple food items.