

Benefits of Joint Criminal-Epidemiological Investigations

The Problem

With rapid scientific advances in capability, knowledge, and accessibility, there are also increased opportunities for intentional misuse of biological material for nefarious purposes.

An intentional release of a pathogen may initially be difficult to discern from a natural outbreak, resulting in separate law enforcement and public health investigations. This can:

- ▶ Impede mutual awareness and communication between the two disciplines
- ▶ Delay determining whether the outbreak is intentional and, if so, apprehending those responsible

The Solution

It is mutually beneficial for law enforcement and public health to conduct joint criminal-epidemiological investigations.

By working together, public health and law enforcement can achieve their separate but often overlapping objectives of:

- ▶ Determining as quickly as possible if the outbreak is intentional or natural
 - If intentional, law enforcement apprehending and prosecuting* those responsible
- ▶ Protecting public health and safety
 - Identifying the biological agent, preventing the spread of disease,** and preventing public panic

* Underscores the importance of having national laws which prohibit the intentional misuse of biological agents, which support obligations of the Biological Weapons Convention and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540

** Supports objectives of the International Health Regulations which obligate nations to detect, report, and respond to public health emergencies of international concern

Public Health

A covert biological attack will likely be first identified by the medical/public health community.

Epidemiologists study how diseases spread and how they can be controlled. An epidemiological investigation primarily involves the meticulous accumulation of information from patient interviews as well as data collected from health surveillance systems.

Goals of an Epidemiological Investigation:

- ▶ Identify the source of disease
- ▶ Implement efforts to control the outbreak
- ▶ Protect health and safety of public, including public health personnel



Law Enforcement

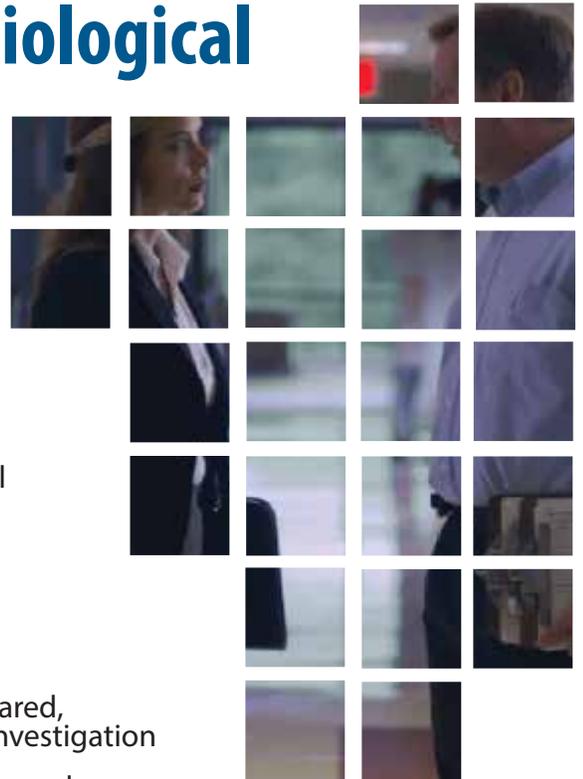
Law enforcement may be confronted with the actual release of a biological agent (overt or covert), or the threatened misuse of a biological agent (real or hoax).

Goals of a Criminal Investigation:

- ▶ Prevent subsequent attacks
- ▶ Identify, apprehend, and prosecute those who intentionally misuse (or conspire, threaten, or attempt to misuse) a biological agent
- ▶ Protect health and safety of public, including law enforcement personnel

Joint FBI/CDC Criminal-Epidemiological Investigations Workshop

Conducted by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Six Strategic Elements:

1 Build Relationships

- ▶ Proactively establishes contacts prior to suspicious biological incidents to build and sustain working relationships
- ▶ Fosters understanding of each other's roles/responsibilities, expertise, and needs

2 Information Sharing

- ▶ Both disciplines have access to unique information that, if shared, could be beneficial to both a criminal and epidemiological investigation
- ▶ Identifies public health and law enforcement triggers to aid in early notification and overcome hesitation to share information before all facts are known

3 Joint Threat Assessment

- ▶ Important to utilize unique expertise of both disciplines when determining credibility of the threat and implementing appropriate response activities to mitigate the threat

4 Joint Investigation

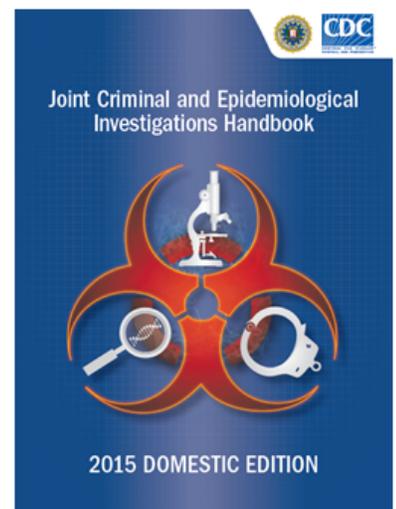
- ▶ Facilitates exchange of real-time investigative information for increased transparency
- ▶ Allows law enforcement access to public health experts that can provide relevant epidemiological and clinical information that may inform the criminal investigation
- ▶ Allows public health access to law enforcement information which could assist in identifying the disease source and containing an outbreak

5 Memorandum of Understanding/Joint Protocols

- ▶ Helps establish joint investigative guidelines and roles for increased interoperability
- ▶ Helps establish consistent procedures regardless of personnel rotation over time
- ▶ Example content might include information sharing triggers, joint interview procedures, or methods for sharing investigative results

6 Joint Training/Exercises

- ▶ Amending protocols to reflect lessons learned and ensure THAT best practices evolve and are strengthened over time



AVAILABLE AT:

www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/wmd/criminal-and-epidemiological-investigation-handbook



Federal Bureau of Investigation
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If you suspect a biological threat, contact the WMD Coordinator at your local FBI field office, or call 1-855-TELL-FBI. To find your local FBI field office, visit: <http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field>