

Champion of COVID Response

CDC - Chicago Quarantine Station Team

CDC Division of Global Migration and Quarantine

Centers for Disease Control



Summary:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Quarantine Stations are part of the Quarantine and Border Health Services Branch (QBHSB) within the Division of Global Migration and Quarantine (DGMQ). One of their primary missions is to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges to staff assigned to the CDC quarantine stations but they confronted these challenges through science, regulation, research, preparedness, response and team work to protect the public's health.

Description: The exceptional COVID-19 response efforts led by the staff at the CDC Chicago O'Hare (ORD) Quarantine Station protected the public's health. Quarantine station staff are responsible for enforcing federal quarantine regulations at U.S. ports of entry which is essential to safeguarding the public's health from the introduction and spread of communicable diseases into the United States. During initial COVID-19 response efforts, staff had to quickly mobilize and coordinate response activities including training deployed staff on COVID-19 response duties related to illness response, screening operations, data collection, contact investigations and public health partnership communications. The CDC ORD Quarantine Station staff engaged with federal, state, and local partners to implement the pandemic response efforts at ORD. As the pandemic response continued, staff experienced unprecedented and increasing numbers of illness responses, contact investigations and implementation of travel restrictions all while continuing to appropriately respond to routine station duties and responsibilities. During 2020 overall, the CDC ORD Quarantine Station team responded to 1,365 illness reports and completed 572 active surveillance reports. The staff conducted over 535 contact investigations, of which 93 involved further action to potentially restrict travel in an infectious person(s) or close contacts. Many of the team members were newer to the quarantine station (whether deployed temporarily or newly hired FTE staff) and had to quickly learn to assist in the management of the structure, implementation, and coordination of the COVID-19 response. The ORD Quarantine Station staff overcame many of the obstacles presented by the pandemic by adapting to the continuous changes and working together as a team and with federal, state, and local partners. They rapidly learned how to navigate through complex situations by providing timely and ongoing situational reports to leadership, proactively identifying problems and potential solutions, and effectively coordinating program activities to support the branch mission, all while implementing new safety measures to protect staff. Strategically building upon existing and cultivating new connections with stakeholders including federal, state, and local public health partners was also an important part of the continued pandemic response efforts. The pandemic presented many challenges to the CDC ORD Quarantine Station staff but, they saw this as an opportunity for growth, to exercise their leadership skills, learn how to effectively confront adversity and build upon individual and team resiliency abilities. Overall, the CDC ORD Quarantine Station demonstrated leadership, professionalism, ingenuity, and adaptability throughout the pandemic response efforts in 2020.

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