

Frequently Asked Questions about ...

Proactive Infection Prevention and Control Assessments

Q: Why does the Virginia Department of Health want to visit my healthcare facility?

A: The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is enthusiastic to participate in an initiative funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to improve infection control and prevention practices in healthcare facilities, especially long-term acute care hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient dialysis facilities, and other outpatient settings. This includes onsite visits to those facilities and a proactive assessment of infection prevention and control practices, also known as an infection control assessment and response (ICAR) visit.

Q: How does a proactive assessment of infection prevention and control practices benefit my facility?

A: VDH Office of Epidemiology and local health departments are working with healthcare facilities to enhance their infection prevention and control (IPC) capacity. By conducting a *proactive* assessment, before there is any identified outbreak or known concern in a facility, VDH can help the healthcare facility by:

- Identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement in their infection prevention and control program.
- Sharing free resources and recommendations to address IPC areas identified for improvement.
- Strengthening the collaborative relationship between your facility and the health department.
- Making the facility's IPC program more prepared for future visits by licensing, accreditation, or other regulatory organizations.

Q: What are the goals and objectives of the ICAR visit?

A: The goal of the ICAR visit is to enhance infection prevention and control capacity in healthcare facilities. Objectives of the visit include:

- Establish and strengthen collaborative relationships between VDH, other statewide partners, local health departments and healthcare partners
- Work with healthcare facilities to assess their IPC programs, identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Provide guidance and recommendations to address areas for improvement

Q: Who are the ICAR team members?

A: The ICAR team is a small team of 3-4 members, composed of staff from the state and local health departments. In some cases, a representative from a statewide partner (such as Quality Insights for outpatient dialysis facilities) may also be a part of the team.



Q: How long is the ICAR visit?

A: The onsite visit lasts less than a day, typically several hours.

Q: What is the focus of the ICAR team?

A: The ICAR team works to facilitate discussions with leadership in the healthcare facility to assess infection prevention practices and provide infection prevention tools and resources. Additionally, the ICAR team will identify, discuss, and mitigate infection prevention gaps by making observations and interacting with frontline staff.

Q: Is the ICAR visit the same as a state inspection?

A: No; the ICAR visit is voluntary and is conducted by health department staff who do not work for a regulatory office/division. The ICAR visit is not punitive nor regulatory. The visit is a collaboration between VDH Office of Epidemiology, other statewide partners, local health departments, and your team to improve infection prevention practices. The visit will be planned in advance, and will not be unannounced.

Q: What is the process of the ICAR visit?

A: Before the site visit, the healthcare facility will:

- Identify a primary point of contact (e.g., infection preventionist, nursing director, nursing supervisor)
- Complete an infection control self-assessment (tool will be provided by VDH)

During the site visit, VDH will:

- Discuss the assessment tool with you
- Perform direct observations of facility practices and provide immediate feedback

After the visit, VDH will:

- Send you a written report within one to two weeks of the visit, summarizing IPC program strengths and recommendations for improvement
- Provide evidence-based resources to help address identified needs
- Follow-up with your facility to check on progress toward addressing IPC gaps and review implemented changes

Q: Will we receive a report of your findings?

A: Yes, the facility will receive a report of the ICAR visit approximately two weeks following the assessment, in addition to a certificate of participation. The report is a summary that highlights strong facility practices and outlines opportunities for improvement. The summary report includes hyperlinked resources and guidance to enhance the facility's IPC program.

Q. How can I request a proactive IPC assessment?

A. Simply complete a [request form](#), and someone from VDH will follow up with your facility.

Q: Whom can I contact for additional information?

A: For more information, please contact the VDH Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance Program by email at hai@vdh.virginia.gov.