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# LESSON LEARNED

## Quarantine and Isolation: Developing Quarantine Guidelines

### SUMMARY

Public health officials may be required to impose quarantine orders in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. Before implementing quarantine, officials should develop guidelines identifying when public health concerns should override a citizen's right to move freely.

### DESCRIPTION

During the 2004 measles outbreak in Iowa, state health officials instituted voluntary quarantine requests to several residents suspected of having the disease. Although most residents complied willingly, seven individuals considered themselves healthy and refused to act in accordance with the state's request. The Iowa Department of Public Health responded by issuing involuntary home quarantine orders to the seven individuals despite vocal public outcry about the violation of civil liberties.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that under ideal circumstances quarantine should be voluntary. This will limit both the disruption of civil liberties and public criticism. However, under some circumstances, involuntary quarantine may be the only way to prevent further spread of the disease. Public health officials should prepare for the possible use of involuntary quarantine by developing clear policy guidelines that identify the circumstances in which voluntary or involuntary quarantine requires the disruption of civil liberties and the repercussions resulting from a negative public response.

### CITATION

- *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. "Postexposure Prophylaxis, Isolation, and Quarantine To Control an Import-Associated Measles Outbreak." 22 October 2004. (<http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/od/phlp/docs/PostexposureProphy.pdf>)

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