

## Food Illness Complaints

Before any notification is sent out about a foodborne illness, it is important to establish the facts associated with the complaint. Foodborne illnesses are a serious matter; however, we first need to do some investigation. There are questions that need to be answered by the person affected and an investigation that needs to happen to establish the factors that cause a foodborne illness. Attached is the form that FH has drafted for use, which you are welcome to use. It is important to follow this process to help define the facts associated with this complaint.

In the event a person should call in with a complaint like this, the questions should be asked by the person receiving the call and answered by the complainant. That person should also seek medical attention or call 911 depending on the severity of the illness and they should also gather any uneaten food for laboratory testing. Asking the key questions and following this process, will help investigators further delve into the root cause, determine if the complaint should be escalated, and notify the proper authorities. The proper authorities will then escalate the notification through their channels so that the public can be alerted if there is a public safety concern.

## What is a Foodborne Outbreak?

If *more than one person, from a separate household, calls to report a similar illness* this could constitute a foodborne outbreak. This would be referred to as an *illness cluster* by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). An illness cluster is when two or more people who do not live in the same household report eating at the same restaurant location, attending a common event, or shopping at the same grocery store location before getting sick. This could happen over multi-state locations where it may be an ingredient in a food product. Investigating illness clusters helps to find the source of an outbreak because an illness cluster suggests that the contaminated food item was served or sold at a specific location or contained the same ingredient.