

## **EpiNet teams – Proposed Terms of Reference**

### **Proposed generic terms of reference for PICT EpiNet teams**

These proposed generic terms of reference were presented at the Regional EpiNet Workshop held in Suva in September 2003. They can serve as an example for countries/territories who would like to clarify the role of the EpiNet teams.

#### ***Name***

The generic name “EpiNet team” designates the core members of the communicable disease (CD) control teams, committees, task forces etc. in the Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). This name may be different from PICT to PICT.

#### ***Areas of expertise of the EpiNet team***

Staff with skills in one or more of the following areas:

- notifiable disease data management
  - clinical medicine
  - laboratory
  - field investigations
  - environmental health
  - public health management and supervision
- Professionals with skills in other areas may also be part of the team (e.g. infection control, immunisation, health policy, disaster management, health promotion and communication).

#### ***Size of EpiNet teams***

It depends on individual PICTs.

In many PICTs, there are five individual nominees.

However:

- in smaller countries, there are often two or three members only
- in large countries, there is:
  - ✓ possibly a larger team (not too large)
  - ✓ a possible replication of EpiNet teams at subnational level (e.g. state, province or division)

#### ***Role of EpiNet team members***

Surveillance and response roles must be defined by, and in the context of each country/territory.

Role proposed for EpiNet team members:

- to be the, or be part of any, official national (or subnational) surveillance and response team,
- to be prepared to mobilise in response to outbreaks or epidemics,

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- to organise the multisectorial Task Force in order to respond to an outbreak or to advise the appropriate authorities on the proper composition of such a Task Force, and to be the technical body in such a Task Force,
- to advocate for political support for communicable and other disease control activities,
- to participate in and support a Pacific network of health professionals who communicate regularly, preferably by email and in a confidential forum, regarding surveillance and response to outbreak-prone CDs: PacNet and PacNet-restricted (the latter subject to agreement from Directors of Health),
- whenever needed, to define clear communication channels to be used in-country, inter-state/country and with the other PPHSN members,
- to properly report outbreaks immediately (or in a timely way) to other health professionals in the PICT and to the other PPHSN members, using PacNet or PacNet-restricted for the latter,
- to develop, adapt and implement PPHSN guidelines, recommendations and strategic framework for the surveillance and response to PPHSN target CDs,
- to immediately investigate suspected outbreaks,
- to organise the public health measures to respond in a timely way to the outbreak,
- to seek appropriate advice and technical support through PPHSN whenever needed.

As well, EpiNet team members should

- attend meetings related to the surveillance and response to outbreak-prone CDs.
- be among those considered by government, should opportunities arise, for further training in surveillance and response.

(Nominations to meetings or training courses are always subject to the decision and discretion of the Ministry of Health or Department of Health.)

A **Primary Focal Point** should be designated in each EpiNet team. This person will be the contact person for the PPHSN and will make sure the other members of the team are kept properly informed. This role can be delegated from time to time.

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## **Proposed terms of reference for the regional EpiNet team**

### ***Composition and role***

The regional EpiNet team should be composed of experts from:

- national/territorial EpiNet teams
- PPHSN allied bodies

They should be prepared to work in other PICTs members of the PPHSN assisting in/carrying out response activities (at distance or in-country) in addition to their normal duties.



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They are to be part of an “on-call” system for outbreaks in the region (when such a system is established).

Members of this regional EpiNet team are to be clearly identified, preferably by area of expertise.