



New Jersey Department of Health -Communicable Disease Service

NJ DOH 2nd Annual Antimicrobial Stewardship Recognition Program Key Points

The New Jersey Department of Health today announced the recipients of the second annual New Jersey Antimicrobial Stewardship Recognition Awards. These awards follow the observance of Antibiotic Awareness Week, an annual recognition hosted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during the month of November to raise awareness of the importance of appropriate antibiotic use to combat the threat of antibiotic resistance.

The New Jersey Antimicrobial Stewardship Recognition Awards is a voluntary, incentive program that encourages healthcare facilities to assess how well they are applying the CDC's *Core Elements of Antibiotic Stewardship*, a set of key principles to guide efforts to improve antibiotic use, advance patient safety and improve outcomes. The complexity of medical decision-making surrounding antibiotic use and the variability in facility size and types of care in U.S. healthcare settings require flexible programs and activities.

During COVID-19, antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASPs) are even more important, where improper treatment of COVID-19 with antimicrobials, reliance on telemedicine usage and lack of diagnostic information, and lack of prioritization for antimicrobial stewardship tenants during COVID-19 can exacerbate antimicrobial resistance in our hospitals and communities. Regardless of the pandemic's contributions to antimicrobial resistance, effective antimicrobial stewardship programs are critically important to 1) curtail the spread of existing multi-drug resistance organisms, 2) prevent the proliferation of emerging MDROs, 3) prevent the development of novel MDRO phenotypes and genotypes, 4) ensure the availability of an effective and robust arsenal of antimicrobials to fight infection and reduce morbidity and mortality, and 5) reduce the occurrence of antimicrobial-related adverse events.

This year, the ASRP application evaluated metrics on hospital leadership commitment, accountability, pharmacy expertise, action, tracking, reporting, and education. Returning Stewards who were awarded last year were eligible to reapply to the same category, either gold silver, or bronze levels, while new applicants were eligible to receive recognition for a non-tiered Antimicrobial Steward Award. This new award was modified in recognition of the challenges New Jersey's healthcare facilities experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the application was stringent, there was an increase in applications from 76 in 2019 to 100 in 2020, and an increase in ASRP awardees in acute care facilities from 51 to 55. This demonstrates the steadfast devotion to establish and maintain effective antimicrobial stewardship programs which protect the patient population, New Jersey residents, and global citizens. Each awardee will receive a certificate and virtual badge from the Department to acknowledge their work in improving the use of antimicrobial medications within their facilities.