FoodCORE: A New Strategy in Foodborne Outbreak Response

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Karen Hunter] Welcome, I'm Karen Hunter, and with me today is Gwen Biggerstaff, CDC's FoodCORE Coordinator. Gwen, tell us what FoodCORE stands for and who participates in it?

[Gwen Biggerstaff] FoodCORE stands for "Foodborne Diseases Centers for Outbreak Response Enhancement." Currently, seven centers participate, and they cover about 13 percent of the US population, or about 41 million people. These centers are based in health departments across the country.

[Karen Hunter] That's a lot of people! What exactly does FoodCORE do?

[Gwen Biggerstaff] Well, FoodCORE centers work together to develop new and better methods to detect, investigate, respond to, and control multistate outbreaks of foodborne diseases. The centers focus mainly on outbreaks caused by bacteria, like *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria*. They also will be better able to detect and investigate viral and parasitic foodborne disease outbreaks as a result of FoodCORE.

[Karen Hunter] Has FoodCORE helped solve any big foodborne outbreaks?

[Gwen Biggerstaff] Yes. One example is when FoodCORE played a key role in solving a 2012 multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* infections that was eventually linked to frozen raw scraped ground tuna. This is a product that's used in certain types of sushi. In five of the seven FoodCORE centers, the laboratories were able to identify people who got sick in this outbreak, because these people had the same strain of *Salmonella* that was causing the outbreak. The centers contributed critical evidence that helped quickly identify the contaminated tuna product.

[Karen Hunter] What other successes can you tell us about?

[Gwen Biggerstaff] The centers work together to develop model practices for outbreak response so others can learn from their experience and replicate what works best.

[Karen Hunter] Tell us a little more about these model practices.

[Gwen Biggerstaff] FoodCORE teams effectively work together to find what sick people ate, do faster DNA fingerprinting of the bacteria that made them sick, and to respond more rapidly. By collaborating, these teams can quickly share information across states and track down contaminated food sources. FoodCORE is building strength in three critical areas of public health – epidemiology, laboratory, and environmental health.

[Karen Hunter] Thanks, Gwen, for telling us about FoodCORE and its successes.

[Gwen Biggerstaff] Thank you for having me! For more information about FoodCORE, please visit www.cdc.gov/foodcore.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.