

Pursuing Excellence in Health Communication: Details on the CDC-INFO Performance Monitoring System

Amy Burnett, MPH; Paul Abamonte, BS; Rasaan Jones, MPH (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Elizabeth Harris, PhD; Janelle Commins, MSPH (EMT Associates, Inc.)

Background

During the peak of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, call volume to CDC-INFO exceeded the monthly average by 60%, peaking at 126,740 calls during October 2009. This experience could indicate that state and local health authorities, and the general public, expect fast, complete, and accurate information from CDC-INFO, as the CDC's "face to the public" during an infectious disease outbreak.

To meet these expectations, CDC-INFO integrated a built-in feedback system. Since 2005, Evaluation, Management, and Training Associates has managed this national evaluation, best characterized as a comprehensive, multi-phase system of quality assurance, performance monitoring and outcome evaluation. The evaluation is based on CDC's evaluation framework. To provide a full range of decisions for continuous quality improvement, the data collection and analyses capture contact volume and topic, contact quality, consumer characteristics, consumer satisfaction, as well as knowledge, attitude, and behavior change.

What is CDC-INFO?

CDC-INFO is an around-the-clock point-source for public health information nationwide.

The CDC-INFO contact center combined more than 40 separate hotlines, interactive voice response services systems, information clearinghouses and in-house informal systems operated the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) into one national integrated service. CDC's national contact center delivers health information 24/7 in English and Spanish on over 400 health and safety topics to consumers, healthcare providers, and professionals. CDC-INFO received an average of 35,955 phone calls, 8,821 emails, and 7,811 publication orders each month in FY 2009.



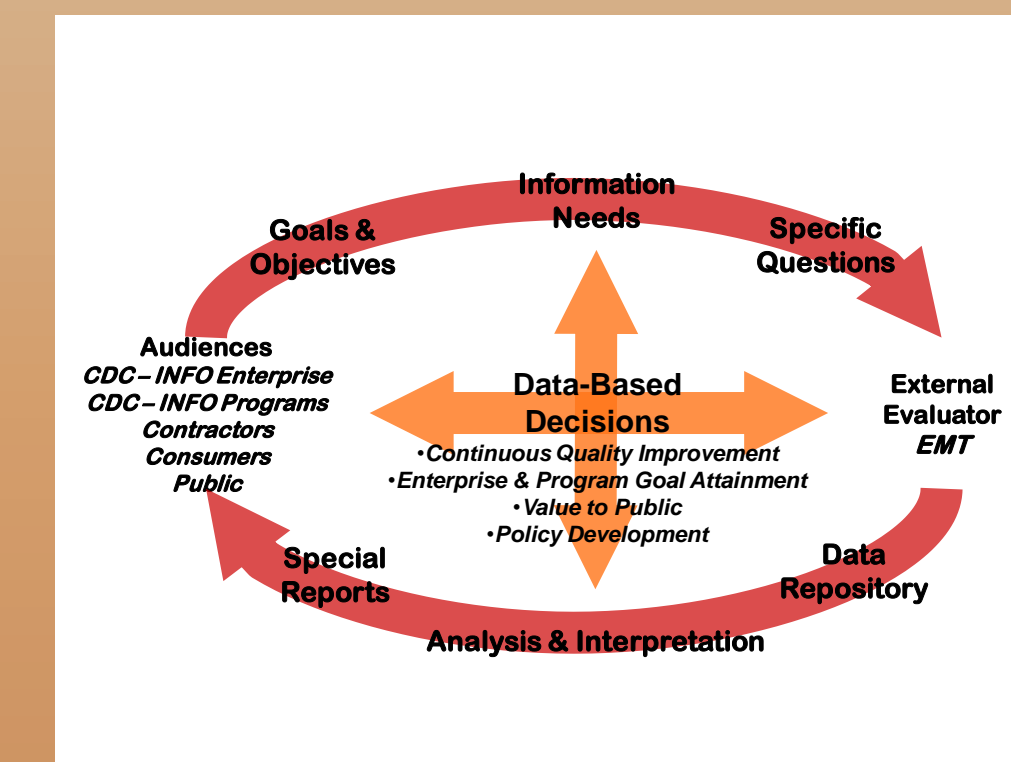
History	Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched in 2005 CDC-INFO employs 94 staff at its National Contact Center Delivers health information 24/7/365 Serves consumers, healthcare providers and professionals English and Spanish service Handles inquiries by telephone, e-mail, fax, and mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handles more than 1.6M telephone inquiries answered since 2005 Responds to over 140,000 e-mails answered since 2005 Fulfills an average 7,811 publication orders monthly

What is Performance Monitoring?

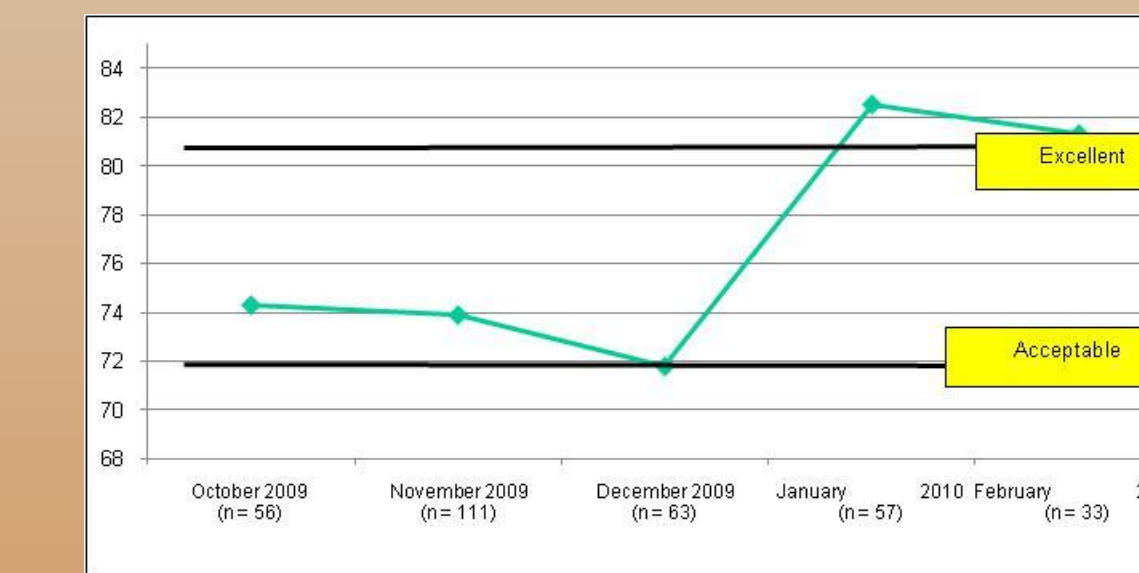
Doesn't stop at counting the number of calls.

Performance monitoring guides CDC-INFO operations using feedback on contact volume and topic, contact quality, consumer satisfaction, and the lasting effects of the service on knowledge, attitude, and behavior. This means that each inquirer

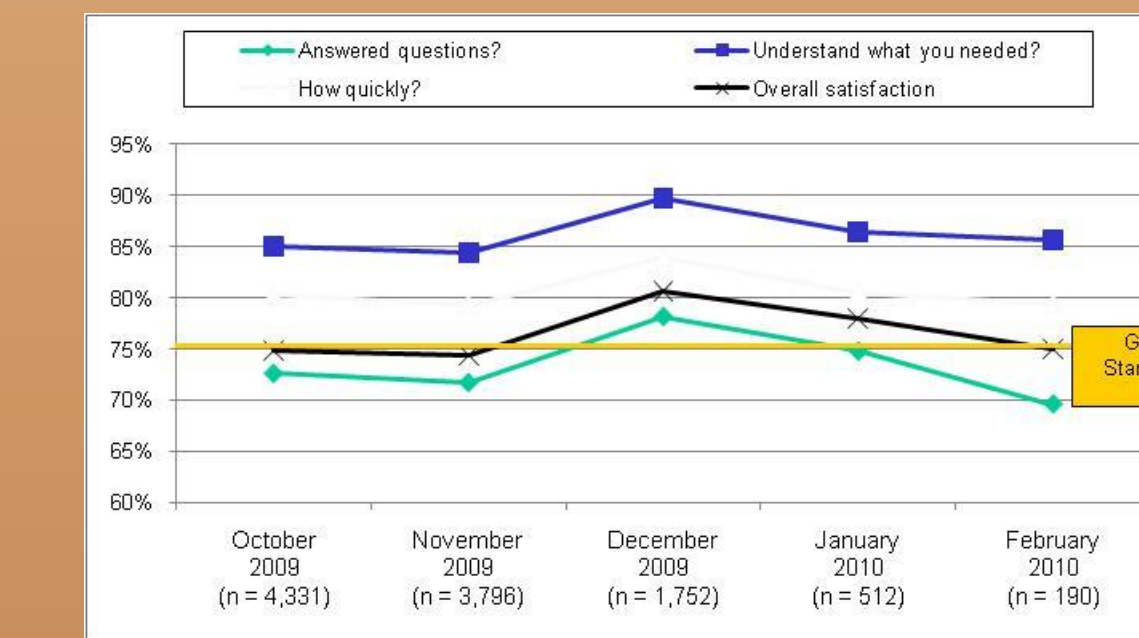
- is completely understood by the agent
- receives an answer using CDC-approved sources that are found quickly and easily
- is treated with the highest degree of professionalism and courtesy
- is satisfied with CDC-INFO
- trusts CDC-INFO as a point-source for information
- will act on the information provided by CDC-INFO



How Do We Know It's Working?



Agent performance is maturing. Agent performance is measured using a scorecard applied to a random sample of calls. The chart to the left shows that agent performance reached high levels towards the end of FY 2009, in spite of a record number of H1N1 calls.



Sustained consumer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction typically hovers around the best practice benchmark of 75% of consumers "very satisfied" with CDC-INFO.

By Monitoring Outcomes:

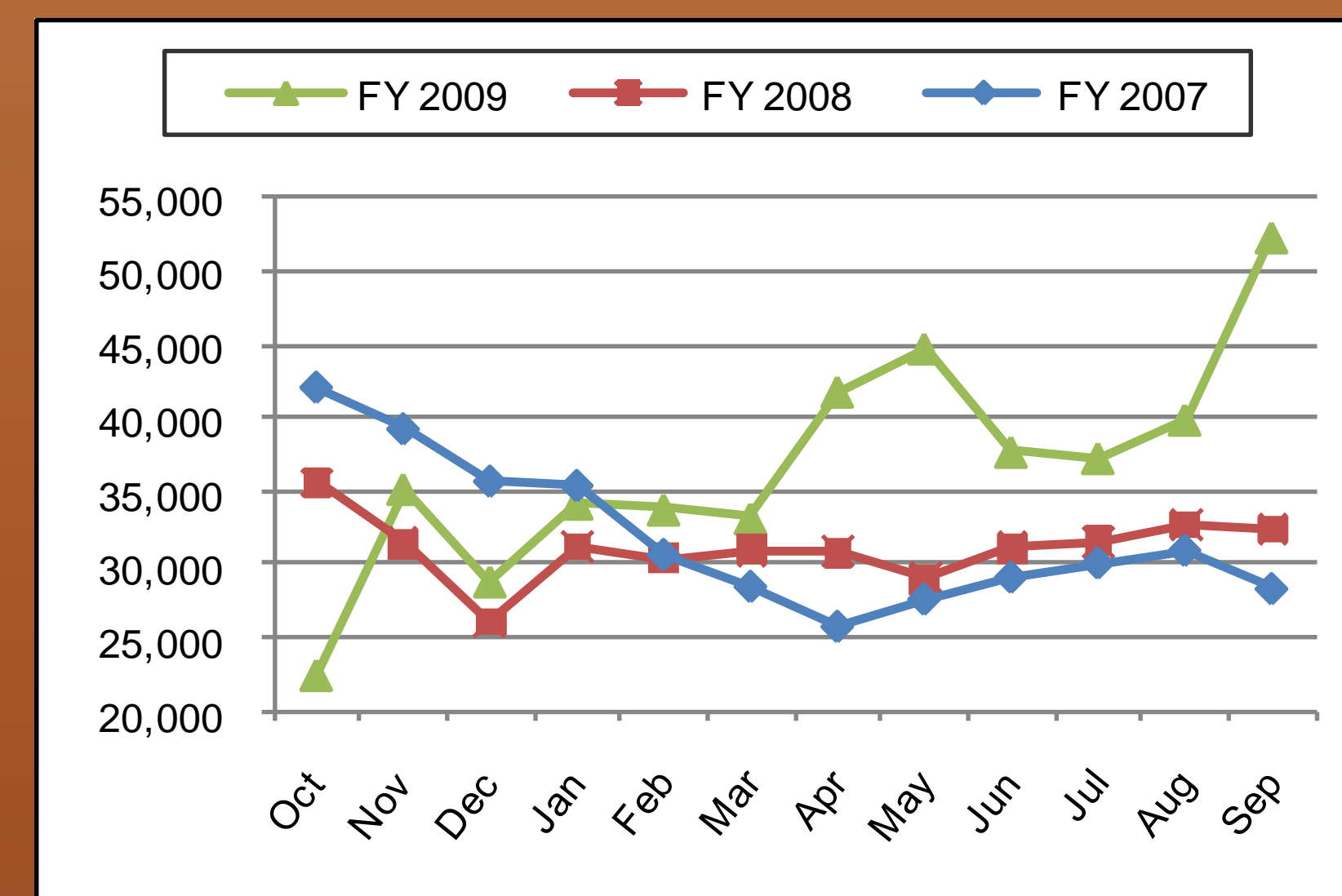
- Over 9,700 callers have participated in a follow-up survey since October 1, 2007.
- In FY 2009, more than 3 in 4 respondents reported learning something they did not know before their call
- Of the 3,512 respondents who learned something new from calling CDC-INFO, 1 in 2 reported an intention to exercise a new, healthy behavior based on what they learned, and the majority (82%) were already engaging in a new behavior, detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. CDC-INFO Follow-up Survey Respondents: Behavior Change October 2009 (N=343)

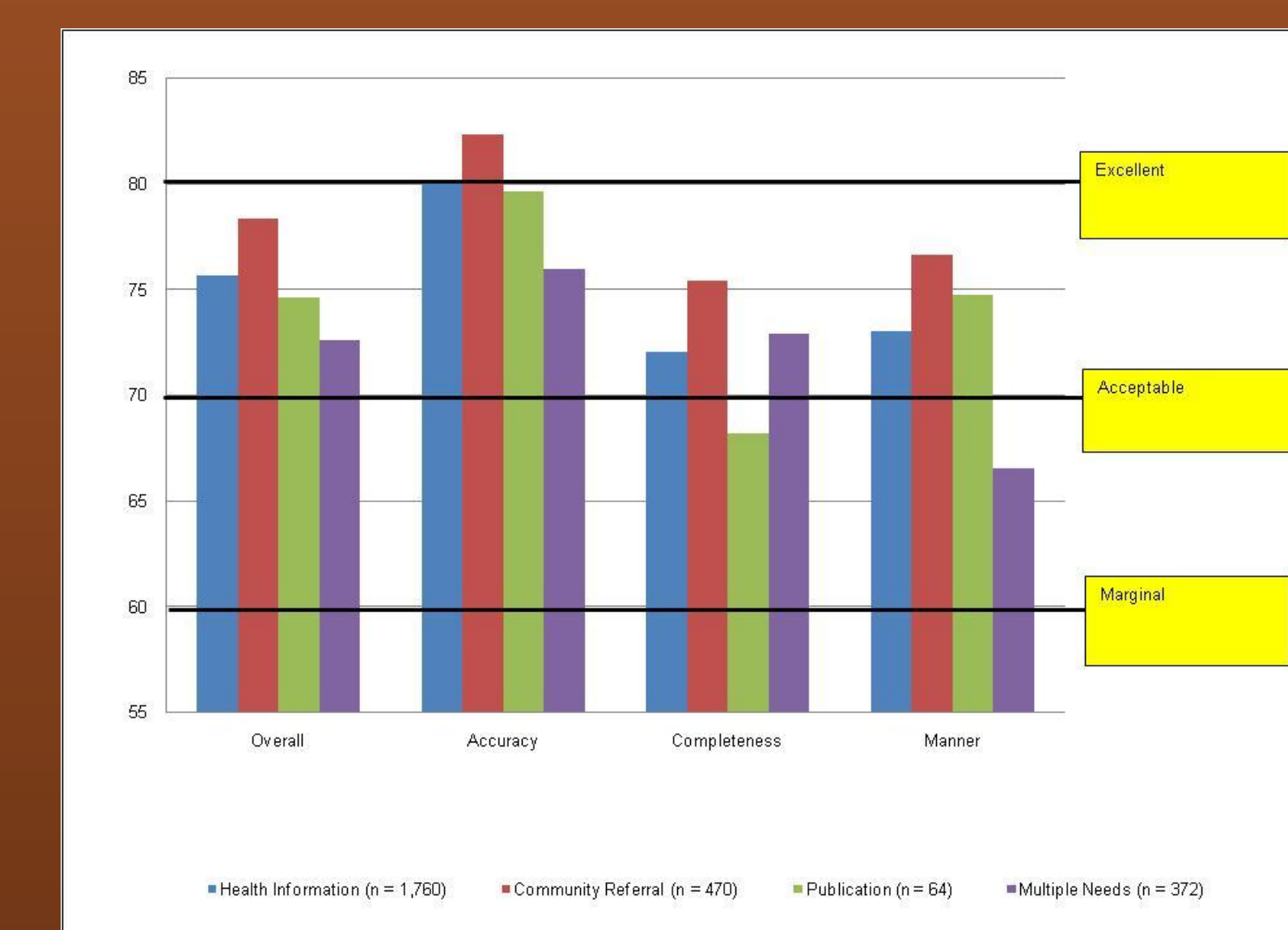
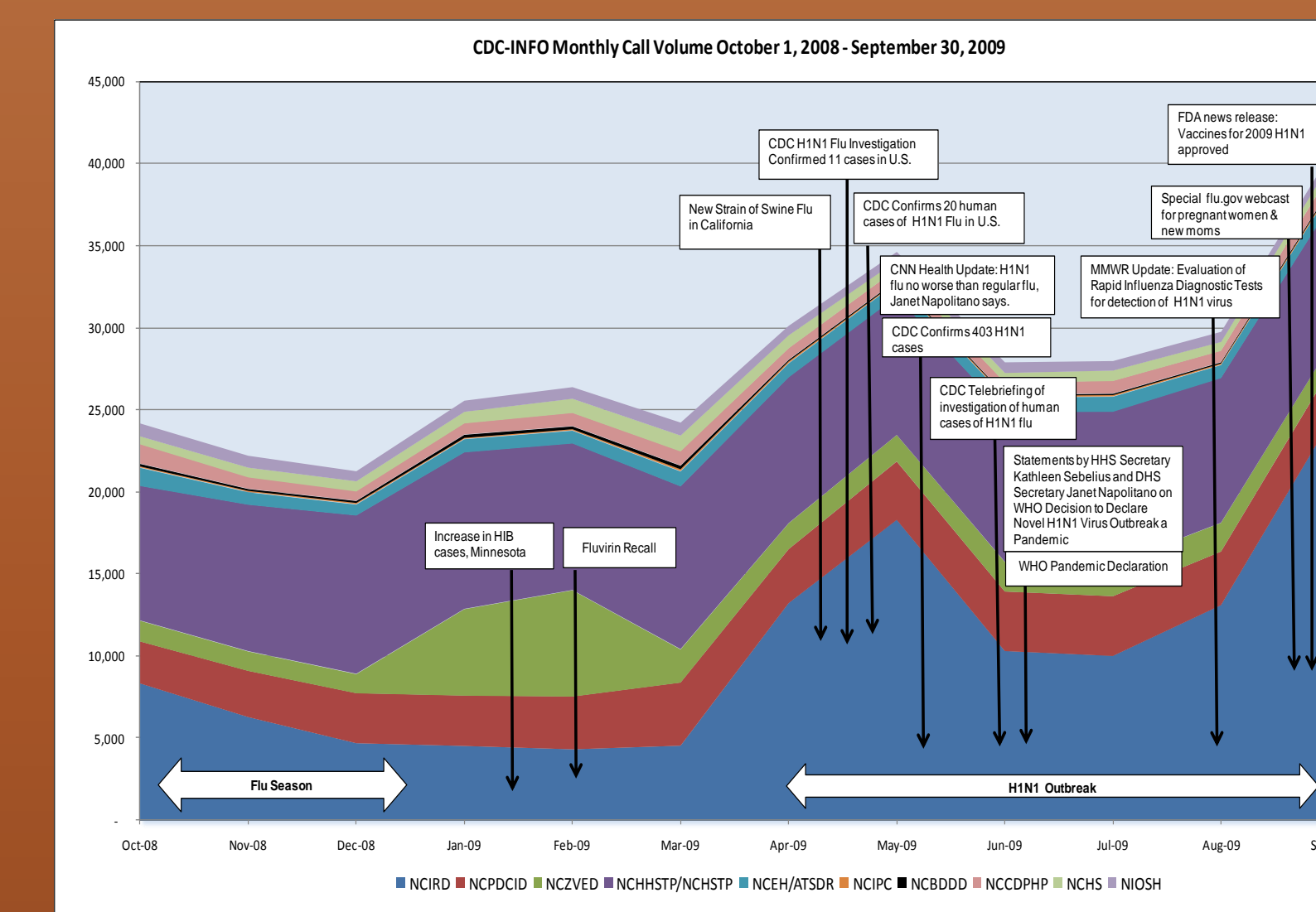
Behavior change	Frequency	Percent
Get immunized	60	17.5%
More aware of environment	47	13.7%
Improve personal or household hygiene	29	8.5%
Reduce risky sexual behaviors	19	5.5%
Reduce anxiety	18	5.2%
Research further into topic	14	4.1%
Plan to see a doctor	9	2.6%
Refused to answer	9	2.6%
Get tested	6	1.7%
Work procedures	6	1.7%
Other	48	13.0%

What are the Key Indicators of CDC-INFO Performance?

Contact Volume: How Many People is CDC-INFO Serving monthly? EMT tracks the number of incoming calls and e-mails on a daily basis.



Responsiveness: How is CDC-INFO serving the public during critical emergencies? EMT monitors the media and CDC updates for current events that correspond with upticks in the number of inquiries, by topic.



Agent Performance: Performance is measured using a scorecard developed by CDC and EMT that measures agent performance across three dimensions: accuracy of information, completeness of information, and manner of delivery.



Conclusions

Performance monitoring has the advantage of providing real-time data and feedback to program managers and administrators, which is useful information for training and quality control, particularly during emergencies. Performance monitoring was a key factor in maintaining a high level of consumer satisfaction and agent performance during the peak of the H1N1 surge in Fall 2009. The 24-hour turnaround of information on volume counts, frequently asked questions, and accuracy of information was integral to this success.