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# **2016-2017 Influenza Season DSHS Region 7**

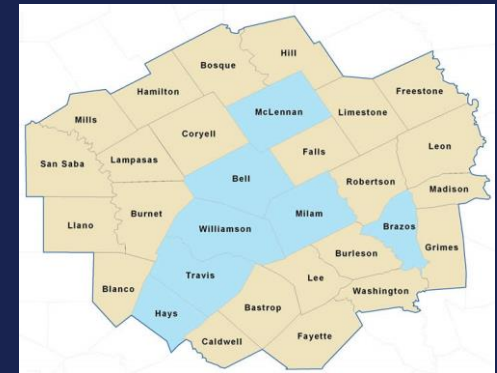
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**Regional Flu Surveillance Coordinator / Epi II**



# Demographics

- Region 7 has 30 counties  
7 have local health departments
- 67 primary flu reporter  
contacts in database





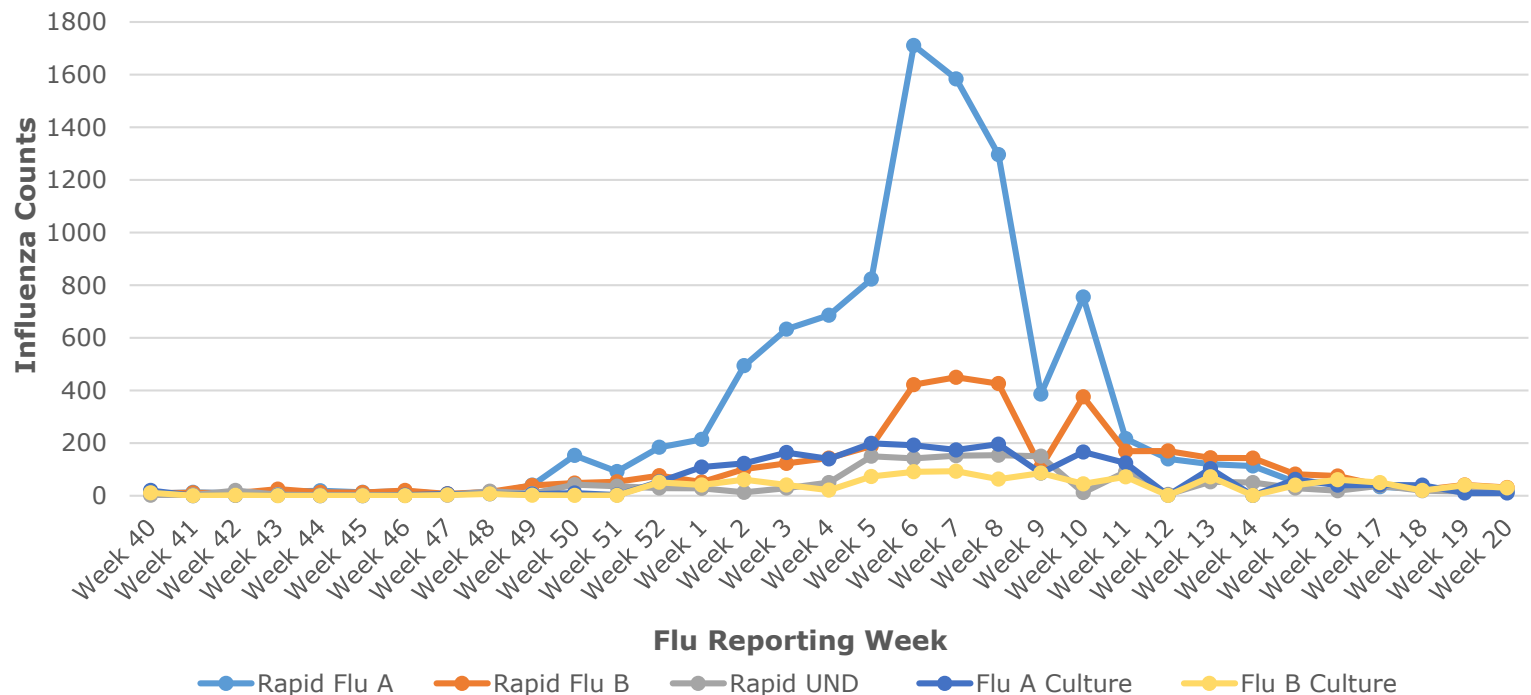
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# Flu Season Snap Shot

## 2016-2017 Reported Influenza Activity by Test Type





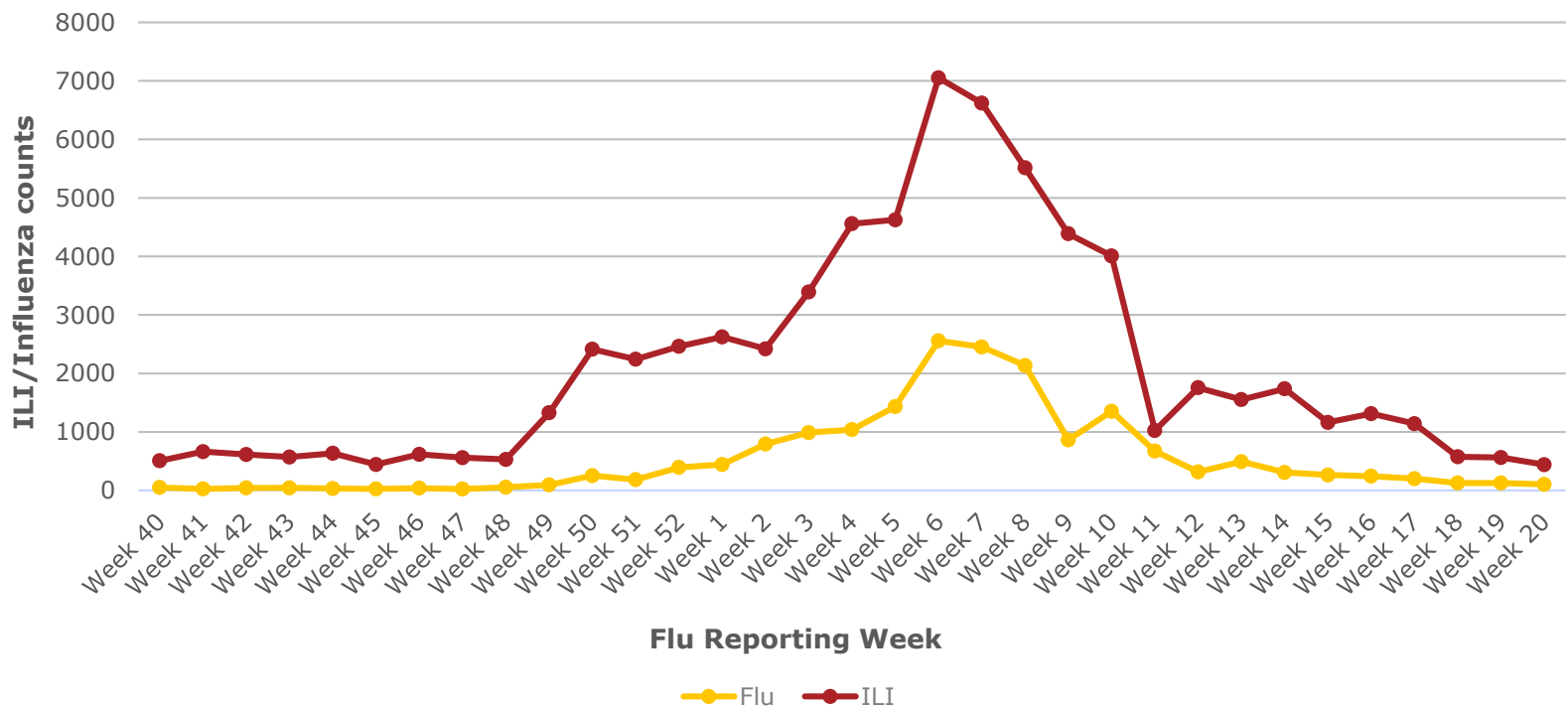
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# Flu Season Snap Shot cont.

2016-2017 Reported Influenza Activity





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# Flu Reporter Survey

- Assess flu reporter engagement
- Assess challenges to collecting data and submitting the flu report to DSHS
- Evaluate knowledge of how flu surveillance data is used and where the weekly flu report can be found

# Phase I: Intro Email



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- Emailed flu reporter contacts to identify
  - Primary and Secondary reporters
  - Provide advance notice that a survey would be going out
  - Explain how information collected would be used

# Phase II: Survey



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- Google Doc or Word document
  - 10 questions
    - Demographics- length of time reporting
    - Knowledge of what happens to flu data, perception of usefulness of reporting
    - Processes for collecting and reporting information
- Sent to schools, healthcare providers, health departments

## Flu Survey 2017

Length of time you have been the ILI/flu reporter

- ☐ Less than 1 yr
- ☐ 1-2 yrs
- ☐ 2-3 yrs
- ☒ 3+ yrs

Type of entity you report for

- ☒ Local health department
- ☐ Long-term care facility
- ☐ Hospital
- ☐ Clinic
- ☐ School district
- ☐ Middle school/Junior High
- ☐ High school
- ☐ Elementary school
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Phase III: Flu Survey Results



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- Overall demographics
- Summary of group-specific:
  - Challenges
  - Methods used to gather information
- Follow-up: Short Report
- Recommendations
- Considerations



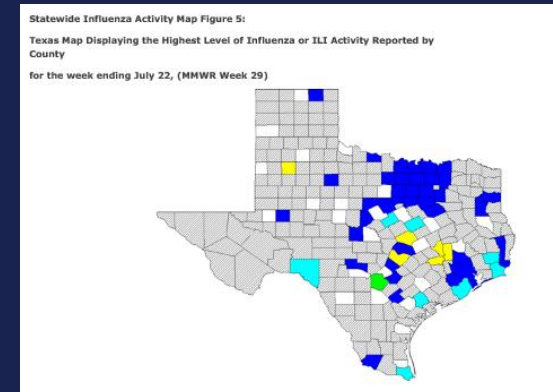


# Overall Demographics

- 90% (62/69) flu reporter contacts had working email addresses
- 42% (26/62) of flu reporter contacts with working emails participated in the survey
  - Healthcare providers (2 clinics, 8 hospital systems, and 1 long-term care facility)
  - Schools (4 elementary schools and 6 school districts)
  - Local health departments (5)
- Thirty-five percent of survey respondents reported being in charge of reporting ILI/Flu trends for less than 1 year. This was followed by those who have been reporting for 3+ years (thirty-one percent), 2-3 years (twenty-three percent), and 1-2 years (twelve percent).



- 73% of survey respondents reported knowing about the [statewide weekly flu summary](#) that is posted on the DSHS website.
- Overall, the top four reasons given for the importance of reporting flu trends to DSHS included:
  - monitoring flu trends
  - tracking and preventing outbreaks
  - tracking the effectiveness of the seasonal vaccine
  - preventing the spread of further illness
- Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents reported having at least one Flu/ILI outbreak during 2016-2017



# School Reporters (Summary)



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- Challenges

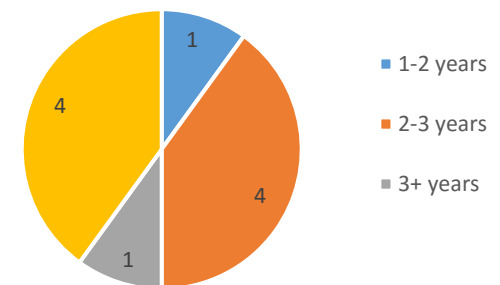
- Schools

- None (50%)
    - Not being able to ensure the accuracy of reports (25%)
    - Staff members not remembering to report flu information to the flu reporter (25%)

- School districts

- The amount of time or labor necessary to receive flu information from various sources and report out to DSHS is a challenge (33%).
    - Additional challenges included underreporting by parents of ill students, forgetting to submit the flu report to DSHS, staff members not remembering to report flu/ILI data to the flu reporter, and inaccurate reports
    - At least one school district reported experiencing no challenges (17%)

School Reporters (N=10):  
Length of time you have been the  
flu/ILI reporter



# School Reporters (Summary) cont.



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- Methods used to gather information

Elementary schools stated that Flu/ILI information is gathered from parents of ill students and student visits to the nurse or school clinic.

School districts gathered information from parents of ill students, student visits to the school nurse or clinic, doctor or medical notes, and attendance clerk/front office staff.

# LHD Reporters (Summary)



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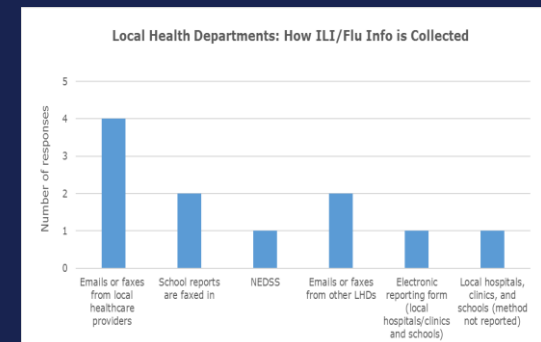
- Challenges

The top challenge reported with gathering information for the DSHS flu report was inconsistent or late reports from providers (80%).

One health department also reported not being able to ensure the accuracy of reports from parents/schools as a challenge.

- Methods used to gather information

Local Health Departments reported that their top three sources of Flu/ILI data are emails or faxes from local health care providers, faxed school reports, and emails or faxes from other LHDs.



# Healthcare Provider Reporters (Summary)



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- Challenges

## Hospitals

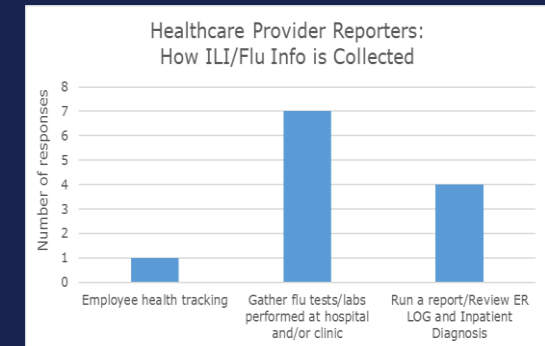
- None (75%)
- The process being labor intensive or time consuming is a challenge.

## Clinics

- No challenge (50%)
- Untimely submission to collate (50%)

## LTCF

- Staff forget to report to the flu reporter





# Follow-up: Short Reports



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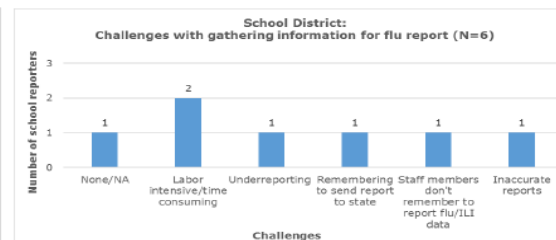
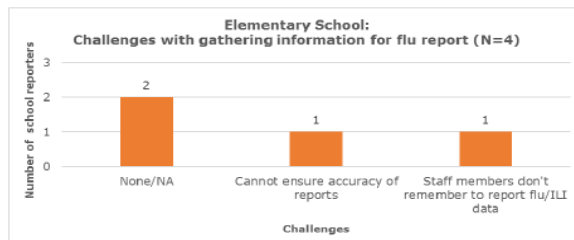
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## 2016-2017 DSHS Region 7 Flu Reporter Survey Results (Schools)

Twenty-six out of sixty-two (42%) flu reporter contacts with working emails participated in our 2016-2017 Flu/ILI survey. This included healthcare provider (2 clinics, 8 hospital systems, and 1 long-term care facility), school (4 elementary schools and 6 school districts), and local health department (5) reporters. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents reported being in charge of reporting ILI/Flu trends to DSHS Region 7 for less than 1 year. This was followed by those who have been reporting for 3+ years (thirty-one percent), 2-3 years (twenty-three percent), and 1-2 years (twelve percent). 73% of survey respondents reported knowing about the [statewide weekly flu summary](#) that is posted on the DSHS website. Overall, the top four reasons given for the importance of reporting flu trends to DSHS included: monitoring flu trends, tracking and preventing outbreaks, tracking the effectiveness of the seasonal vaccine, and preventing the spread of further illness. Lastly, thirty-eight percent of survey respondents reported having at least one Flu/ILI outbreak during 2016-2017.



Regarding school flu reporters, elementary schools stated that Flu/ILI information is gathered from parents of ill students and student visits to the nurse or school clinic. On the other hand, school districts gathered information from: parents of ill students, student visits to the school nurse or clinic, doctor or medical notes, and attendance clerk/front office staff. Specific challenges shared were: not being able to ensure the accuracy of reports and staff members not remembering to report flu information to the flu reporter. Additionally, fifty-percent of elementary schools reported having no challenges collecting Flu/ILI data to submit to DSHS. One-third of school districts stated that the amount of time or labor necessary to receive flu information from various sources and report out to DSHS was a challenge. Additional challenges included underreporting by parents of ill students, forgetting to submit the flu report to DSHS, staff members not remembering to report flu/ILI data to the flu reporter, and inaccurate reports (for example, after further follow-up with parents, discovering that a student was absent from school because of general malaise). At least one school district reported experiencing no challenges.



### Possible recommendations for the next season:

- Create an electronic form/short survey for parents to check off Flu/ILI symptoms (see ILI definition on the DSHS Region 7 reporting form for the right definition) or positive test results. Email the survey to parents, print out the form for students to take home, or post it on the school website/parent portal.
- For school districts overwhelmed by the challenge of gathering data and reporting in a timely manner, identify schools that are consistent/thorough enough to report directly to DSHS Region 7 in a timely fashion. This may lower the workload since you will be submitting for a smaller portion of schools.
- Contact DSHS Region 7 if you are concerned about an increase in Flu/ILI cases at your school and would like some flu testing to be done to rule out other respiratory illnesses.
- Identify responsible volunteers or interns that may be able to assist with Flu/ILI surveillance and can help streamline the information gathering process.
- Remember to notify DSHS Region 7 if you are seeing many absences due to reported Flu/ILI. We can assist with testing, if needed, and it's a great way to keep us informed so that we can provide accurate information when contacted by the State Health Department, community members, or the local media.



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## Additional Sources

- Public health nurses notified us of at least two school closures
  - Letters sent out to parents, social media
- Media notification
  - Inquiry
  - News story





# Considerations

- All providers won't test for flu, especially during the summer
- All parents won't take their children to the doctor
- Students may go to the school nurse/clinic
- Parents don't realize that there are other respiratory illnesses (not just the flu)
  - Strep throat
  - RSV

# Considerations cont.



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- Re-emphasize that there are statewide resources for testing
- Stronger collaboration with public health nurses
- Incorporate flu surveillance activities into pre-existing parent notification systems / healthcare reporting systems
- Utilization of trained volunteers and staff
- Implement “reminder” system



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# **Thank you!**

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