

Modernizing Outreach and Referral to Services with Electronic Case Reporting (eCR)

How the Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch is Using eCR to Help Children and Families Affected by Birth Defects



Every year, six percent of infants in Texas are born with a birth defect. The Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch (BDESB) helps connect children with birth defects and their families to agency social workers from Regional and Local Health Operations (RLHO) for assistance accessing health and social services. BDESB also shares important birth defects prevention information with women planning for pregnancy. BDESB is using electronic case reporting (eCR), an innovative way of receiving timelier data from electronic health records, to help these families sooner.

About the Texas Birth Defects Registry (TBDR)

The Texas Birth Defects Registry (TBDR) is a statewide registry managed by BDESB. Highly trained staff review medical records to find cases with birth defects. If the medical record shows that the baby or fetus has a birth defect, information from the medical record is manually entered by staff into the TBDR.

What is electronic case Reporting (eCR)?

Electronic case reporting (eCR) is the automated exchange of data from electronic health records to public health agencies. BDESB has recently started receiving eCR reports about cases with birth defects. With eCR, less manual review of medical records is needed, which helps BDESB find cases faster.

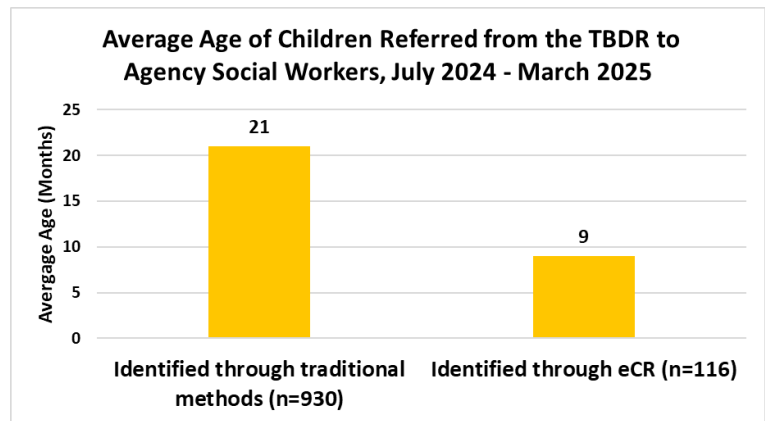


Using eCR to Help Families Access Services Sooner

BDESB routinely identifies children from the TBDR to connect to agency social workers. Social workers contact families and help them access various services including medical and financial assistance programs. Social workers also offer families case management if a family would like to receive longer-term support. Beginning in July 2024, BDESB began connecting children with social workers who were found through eCR. Since then, BDESB has referred 1,046 children to

social workers. Of these, 116 were found through eCR. On average, the children found through eCR were 12 months younger than children found through traditional methods.

By using eCR, BDESB is helping connect children with birth defects and their families to agency social workers for assistance accessing services sooner.



Using eCR to Reduce the Risk of Neural Tube Defect Recurrence

Neural tube defects (NTD) are severe birth defects of the brain and spine. Women who have had a pregnancy affected by an NTD have an increased risk of recurrence (giving birth to another child with an NTD). If planning to become pregnant again, the CDC recommends that these women consume 4,000 mcg of folic acid, a B-vitamin, daily to reduce their risk of recurrence.



Neural tube defects occur when the neural tube does not close properly.

Each month, BDESB identifies women in the TBDR who have had a recent NTD-affected pregnancy. These women are mailed a letter and leaflets that explain:

- the woman's increased risk for an NTD in future pregnancies,
- the benefits of taking 4,000 mcg of folic acid, and
- the importance of consulting with a healthcare provider about folic acid.

Beginning in April 2024, BDESB began sending the NTD recurrence information to women whose case was found through eCR. Since then, BDESB has sent 390 mailouts to women with NTD-affected pregnancies. Of these, 28 were found through eCR. On average, women whose case was found through eCR were sent the NTD recurrence prevention mailout an average of 17 months sooner.

By identifying cases through eCR, BDESB is sharing important information about folic acid for NTD recurrence prevention with women sooner. BDESB continues to explore ways to use eCR to help children and families in Texas affected by birth defects.

For more information, visit: dshs.texas.gov/birthdefects



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