

Texas Syndromic Surveillance FAQs for Data Providers

What is Syndromic Surveillance? Syndromic Surveillance allows for early detection of abnormal health trends and can provide situational context for further public health investigations. Early insight into these patterns can help to reduce their impact on community health across Texas.

How does syndromic surveillance work?



Who is eligible to submit data?

Hospitals with emergency departments, free-standing emergency centers, and urgent care centers.

What type of agreement is required?

Data providers must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). Individual users must sign a User Access Agreement and the Health and Human Services Acceptable Use Agreement.

How much does it cost?

Participation is free. Facilities may incur internal IT costs to establish and maintain the data connection.

How does viewing data work?

Data are accessed through our TxS2 ESSENCE (Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics) platform. Facilities can view data from within their facility system and aggregate statewide data.

Are the data in TxS2 ESSENCE confidential?

Yes, data are secure, confidential, and classified as Protected Health Information (PHI). DSHS stores all data in secure databases accessed only by authorized users.

Syndromic Surveillance in Action

- Enhancing narrative data documented in free-text fields for use in event-based surveillance
- Providing sufficient race and ethnicity data to assist with creating tailored health interventions
- Increasing reporting frequency to aid in responding to emerging threats early

What are the technical specifications for TxS2 ESSENCE?

DSHS configured TxS2 ESSENCE to support the [Public Health Information Network \(PHIN\) Messaging Guide](#) for Syndromic Surveillance.

How do data get into TxS2 ESSENCE? How often is it updated?

The data stream is between a facility's Electronic Health Record (EHR) and the TxS2 ESSENCE. The EHR automatically captures and sends the data to TxS2 ESSENCE. Facilities are expected to submit data at least once every 24 hours.

How is TxS2 ESSENCE beneficial for data providers?

TxS2 ESSENCE facilitates data interoperability between facilities and health departments. Facilities are eligible for the Federal Promoting Interoperability Program.

How is TxS2 ESSENCE beneficial for public health officials?

Public health officials can use the system for early event detection, situational awareness, and querying the data for syndromes of interest.

How many facilities submit data to TxS2 ESSENCE?

There are more than 400 facilities submitting data to TxS2 ESSENCE, with more added each month.

What TxS2 ESSENCE data can data providers access?

Data Source:

- Emergency Room (ER) datasets
- Air Quality
- Weather Station

How is this platform related to the Tarrant County system or the Houston Health Department (HHD) system?

Facilities in PHR 2/3 submit to Tarrant. Facilities located in PHR 6/5S submit to HHD ESSENCE. Data from those systems feed into TxS2 ESSENCE.