

Texas Syndromic Surveillance FAQs for Local Health Departments

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?

Local Health Departments (LHDs) 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.

What type of queries can LHDs run within TxS2 ESSENCE?

Pre-defined queries and free-text queries can be used:

- Chief Complaint and Discharge Diagnosis Categories (e.g., COVID-19, Near Drowning, etc.)
- Syndromes (e.g., Rash, Fever, Exposure, etc.)
- Discharge Diagnosis (e.g., ICD codes and SNOMED CT)
- Triage Notes (e.g., free text field)

How does viewing data work?

Data are accessed through the TxS2 ESSENCE (Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics) platform. LHDs can view data from within their Public Health Region 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 Data in Action

- Respiratory Illness Surveillance
- Extreme Weather Events
- Mass Gathering Event Surveillance
- Wildfire Surveillance
- Near drowning prevention efforts

How can LHDs support onboarding facilities in their jurisdiction?

- Leverage existing relationships
- Promote public health value
- Share success stories and use cases
- Encourage facilities to [register their intent](#) to submit data

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 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 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 LHDs access?

Data Source:

- Emergency Room (ER) datasets*
- Mortality
- Poison Control
- Air Quality
- Weather Station

*User Access based on PHR jurisdiction

How does TxS2 ESSENCE compare to the Tarrant County and Houston Health Department (HHD) systems?

TxS2 ESSENCE is the statewide system managed by DSHS, while Tarrant County and HHD ESSENCE are locally managed systems focused on their respective jurisdictions.