



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

**Texas Department of State
Health Services**

Syndromic Surveillance Governance Council

February 7, 2019

1:00 PM–3:00 PM

DSHS, 1100 West 49th Street, M-101

Austin, TX 78756

Conference Call Line: (877) 820-7831

Participant Passcode: 467953#

Attendees (*Council Members):

- * Herminia Alva, MPH, CPH, Disaster Epidemiologist, Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, Department of State Health Services
- * Brittany Burgess, MPH, Epidemiologist, Victoria County Public Health Department
- * Carol M. Davis, MSPH, CPH, Deputy Regional Director, Public Health Region 7, DSHS
- * Linda K. Gaul, MPH, PhD, State Epidemiologist, DSHS
- * David W. Gruber, MBA, Associate Commissioner, Division for Regional and Local Health Operations, DSHS
- * Carol Hill, Assistant Director, City of Amarillo Health Department
- * Talmage M. Holmes, PhD, MPH, Associate Director, Disease Control and Prevention, Tarrant County Public Health
- * Philip Huang, MD, MPH, Medical Director/Health Authority, Austin Public Health
- * Johnathan Ledbetter, MPH, Epidemiologist/Invasive and Respiratory Infectious Disease Team Lead, Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Branch, DSHS
- * Belinda Medrano, MPH, Infection Prevention, Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville
- * Thaddeus Miller, MPH, DrPH, Associate Professor, University of North Texas Health Science Center, School of Public Health
- * Weizhen Moline, PMP, CSM, CTCM, Branch Manager for Consumer Protection and Regional and Local Health Operations, Texas Health and Human Services IT, Public Health Applications
- * Joann Schulte, DO, MPH, Chief Physician, and Deputy Health Authority, Houston Health Department

Steve Eichner, HIT Policy Director, CER, DSHS

Nancy Ejuma, PhD, MBA, Deputy Associate Commissioner, Division for Regional and Local Health Operations, DSHS

Paul Grunenwald, Communicable Disease Manager, Public Health Region 6/5S, DSHS

Ashley Hawes, Epidemiologist, Austin Public Health

Heidi Honza Threadgill, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 2/3, DSHS

Dave Kolberson, Preparedness, Response and Epidemiology Manager, Public Health Region 9/10, DSHS

Jeffrey Koss, Research Specialist III, RLHO, DSHS

David Leary, Deputy Regional Director, Public Health Region 4/5N, DSHS

Jyllisa Mabion, Syndromic Surveillance Epidemiologist, RLHO, DSHS

Kiley Mann, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 6/5, DSHS

Joel Massey, MD, Medical Resident, DSHS

Kevin McClaran, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 1, DSHS

Scott Mize, Epidemiologist, Tarrant County Public Health

Bonnie Morehead, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 7, DSHS

Olubukunola Okulate, Biostatistician, Houston Health Department

Vanessa Palacios, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 9/10, DSHS

Carlos Plasencia, Regional Medical Director, Public Health Region 6/5S, DSHS

Emilie Prot, Regional Medical Director, Public Health Region 11, DSHS

Steven Pulvino, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 2/3, DSHS

Victor Rosas, Administrative Assistant IV, RLHO, DSHS

Elise Rush, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 8, DSHS

Albesa Salinas, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 11, DSHS
Bill Stephens, Informatics Manager, Tarrant County Public Health
Rachael Straver, DVM, Medical Research Specialist, Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Branch, DSHS
Lenae Warner, Epidemiologist, Public Health Region 7, DSHS
Biru Yang, PhD, Informatics Manager, Houston Health Department
Li (Julie) Zhu, Systems Analyst IV, HHSC

Council Members Not Present:

- * Carl Vartian, MD, MS, Chief Medical Information Officer, HCA-Gulf Coast Division
- * J. Don Vickers, MEd, CCHP, CMP, CNE, CEO/Managing Partner HPT Healthcare

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Roll call of Council Members and introductions of other attendees.
- New council member, Carol Hill, Assistant Director of the City of Amarillo Health Department was introduced and welcomed. She will be filling the role of Medium Local Health Department (population 50,000 - 250,000).

2. Approval of October 16, 2018, Meeting Minutes

- Meeting minutes were approved by email by 6 of 14 filled Council seats (4 did not attend the meeting and 4 did not vote).

3. Old Business

a. TxS2 Operations Update

- There are a total of 251 hospitals in production, including those onboarded directly through DSHS and those from the Tarrant County feed. Houston Health Department onboarding will continue throughout the spring season.
- DSHS Update:
 - 146 hospitals in production with TxS2, several are currently onboarding.
 - 43 hospitals in production with NSSP.
- Tarrant County Update:
 - There are currently 96 facilities in production and reporting to TxS2 in PHR 2/3.
 - 5 hospitals have yet to engage.
 - 4 facilities are currently awaiting onboarding. They have been registered for over a year, but these hospitals are in the process of transferring over to new EHR systems.
- Houston Status Update:
 - In ESSENCE, there are new hospital systems submitting production data.
 - 4 facilities are currently in validation.
 - 1 facility is currently in testing and 4 facilities are registered.
 - Some facilities are not receiving validation reports and Houston is currently working with the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP) to resolve this issue.
 - Post-ESSENCE conversion data transfer is now complete (2016-2018).

b. Former TALHO system

- DSHS is no longer supporting TALHO. All remaining data providers should have been notified to complete the transition as soon as possible.

- 6 remaining TALHO facilities are actively testing.
- DSHS continues to terminate connections based on the transition plan and transferring historical data into TxS2.

c. Meaningful Use

- At the federal level, Meaningful Use has been rebranded as Promoting Interoperability and that applies to both Medicaid and Medicare programs. On the Medicaid side, very few hospitals in Texas remain eligible, while Medicare eligibility is up. It will be an ongoing program and eligible providers and facilities will receive credit for participating.

4. New Business

a. CoAg for Emergency Response

- ESSENCE enhancements will occur over the next year. They will add additional functionality and will be incorporating emergency medical services data, as well as poison control data.
- Along with the Center for Health Statistics staff, Jyllisa Mabion provided ESSENCE training at the Regional Opioid workshops in PHR 9/10, PHR 11, PHR 8.
- PHR 7 workshop will be held soon.

b. Organizational Changes

- The intention is to integrate the data-related pieces of RLHO (i.e. TxS2, GIS, and RedSky). The DSHS, Office of the Associate Commissioner, under Nancy Ejuma, has created this group. It will focus on being able to turn around data so that it can be operationally usable.

c. Regional Advisory Committees (and summaries of projects presented during poster session)

- Region 1:
Created a tool that documents review of syndromic surveillance alerts on a regular basis. Region 1 plans to host LHD training with Lubbock in which they will discuss using the syndromic surveillance database for flu surveillance.
- Region 2/3:
The poster included two types of surveillance for influenza which looked at ILI and heat-related illness surveillance. (Dave asked that the region share this data with the central office team since weekly reports are submitted to LIDS and so that data which came from ESSENCE can be included in these reports as well.) Lastly, the SSRAC is becoming more familiarized with ESSENCE and also assisting new academic users in their region.
- Region 4/5:
Poster topic based on an actual recent case of chemical contamination in a rural water system in which TCEQ was asked to conduct medical consultations with some affected residents. The region's lead epidemiologist worked with Jyllisa Mabion to create a query that searched for specific ER symptoms. There was a noticeable rise in ER cases based on the query. This is a good example of how to use a query for a single event.
- Region 6/5:
Poster discussed how to share and use data between regional stakeholders. Additionally, the regional staff is in the process of reaching out to LHDs for ESSENCE onboarding.

- **Region 7:**
Poster topic was about the severe flooding and resulting Boil Water Notice that occurred in several counties in Region 7 in October 2018. Lastly, regional epidemiologists that meet for BioWatch will begin to meet more frequently and will begin brainstorming and developing queries that are region-specific.
- **Region 8:**
The vast majority of flu surveillance is conducted by state-funded public schools for submission to the Texas Education Agency. However, during summer and winter breaks, these partners do not report. The poster project looked at what implications this could have and how to best account for these trends in the surveillance process. In addition, the region will soon attend the annual preparedness and response event where they plan to present on syndromic surveillance and provide an ESSENCE overview.
- **Region 9/10:**
Poster focused on BioWatch at a planned event, the 85th Annual Sun Bowl, in El Paso, TX. The team utilized ESSENCE as an additional tool for tracking chief complaints at ER visits, as well as holding daily phone conferences with local hospitals. This provided a good picture of where patients were coming from. Moreover, the scheduled SSRAC meeting for November 9, 2018, was canceled and will be rescheduled. Additionally, epidemiologist visits to regional provider offices will begin at the end of February 2019. These visits will serve as an opportunity to highlight the work that is currently being done with ESSENCE. Lastly, the regional opioid workshop was held mid-December 2018 and had over thirty attendees from an array of regional facilities.
- **Region 11:**
Poster focused on using syndromic surveillance to monitor regional cases of gastrointestinal illnesses. In comparing data with local hospitals, the team concluded that they had arrived at comparable results. Additionally, the team announced that they still have three hospitals that are using TALHO. Lastly, the next SSRAC meeting will be held during Spring 2019.
- **Houston Health Department:**
Poster focused on the Jurisdictional Etiquette Committee and the Syndromic Surveillance Consortium. This group was formed after the switch from Real-time Outbreak Disease Surveillance (RODS) to ESSENCE. This will allow for a smaller group that can have better communication and provide for an opportunity for improved guidance and support for all members. The group was established to tackle issues related to data sharing. The group has developed and implemented a policy that addresses avoiding effort duplications, using different alert systems, and holds regular meetings to discuss data sharing best practices.
- **Tarrant County:**
The poster highlighted a syndromic surveillance-use case and how it was used to conduct interrupted time series analysis during the Hurricane Harvey surge, specifically focusing on counties that were mandatorily evacuated. They found that a significant migration from Houston to Dallas occurred; Dallas experienced a 200% surge compared to normal daily flow. As a result, the team was able to amass a significantly large amount of secondary analytics data.

- City of Austin:
Presented three poster projects which focused on the implementation of keyword surveillance. One project focused on the surveillance of ER visits due to scooter trauma injuries. They were able to do so by using “scooter” as their keyword. Additionally, by using the word “boil” as a keyword, they were able to surveil the number of ER visits concerning GI illnesses and burn injuries during the October 2018 Austin Boil Water Notice.

d. Topics for Discussion at April SSGC Meeting

- April meeting will be held via conference call.
- Query and Data Analysis Sharing and Standardization update.
- Requests for additional discussion topics.

5. Open Discussion

At the next meeting, we will discuss aspects of syndromic surveillance that are currently working and not working. We’ll also discuss the three components of data quality: completeness, timeliness, and validity in addition to query criteria uniformity across the regions, and the process of transferring historical TALHO data to ESSENCE.

6. 2019 Meeting Dates and Time

Meeting invites for all upcoming meetings have been sent out via email.

- April 18, 2019, 1:00 PM (meeting will be held via conference call).
- July 11, 2019, 1:00 PM (meeting will be held via conference call).
- October 24, 2019, 1:00 PM (meeting will be held via conference call).

7. Closing