

# National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS): The General Sections

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS) for foodborne, waterborne, enteric person-to-person, and animal contact outbreaks. In this training video, we will provide a brief overview of how to complete the General Section of a NORS report by covering the following tabs: General-Part 1, General-Part 2, General-Part 3, General-Lab, and Attachments. Please refer to the other training videos for instructions specific to various modes of transmission.

## CREATE A NEW REPORT

To create a new report, place your cursor over the “Reports” tab, then click on “New.” In the “State NORS ID” text box, enter a name for the report. Remember, the name of the report must be unique and the limit on the length of the name is 13 characters. (Type “Training5”)

Then “Specify the first ill range” – If the outbreak occurred on or after January 1, 2009, click on the first button, which will direct you to create a NORS report. However, if the outbreak occurred prior to 2009, click on the second button and you will be directed to eFORS.

For this example, the date of our first ill occurred in 2009, so we are clicking on the first button.

Then click, “Generate.”

## TAB: GENERAL-PART 1

### Primary Mode of Transmission

In the General-Part 1 Tab, under “Primary Mode of Transmission” – select one primary mode of transmission from the list given. For this example, it is a foodborne outbreak, so we will select “Food.”

### Investigation Methods

Next, in the “Investigation Methods” section – select any and all the investigational methods that were utilized in the outbreak. To make multiple selections, hold down the control button on your keyboard while simultaneously selecting your options by clicking with the mouse. For this example, we interviewed ill persons and conducted a case-control study, so the first two options are selected.

If there are any comments regarding the investigational methods, please type these comments in the text box called, “Comments” under the “Investigational Methods” section. (*Type “no additional comments”*)

### Dates

In the “Dates” section, you will notice that the “Date first case became ill” has a default value of January 1, 1950. When entering your reports, please make sure to always delete the default value and enter the appropriate date for your outbreak.

In general, dates may be entered in two ways: you can enter dates manually or you can choose dates from the calendar and they will automatically populate the field. If you enter dates manually, please be sure to use the 2-digit month, 2-digit day, and a 4-digit year format. (*Type 01/02/2009 for Date first case became ill*) If you choose dates from the calendar, it will automatically populate the date field. (*Use calendar to enter 02/10/2009 for Date last case became ill*)

Fill in the other dates in this section as appropriate, such as date of initial exposure, date of last exposure, date of report to CDC, and date of notification to state/territory or local/health authorities. (*Type in Date of initial exposure, Date of last exposure, Date of report to CDC, and Date of notification to state/territory or local/health authorities using the following dates: 12/28/2008, 01/05/2009, 2/10/2009, 01/10/2009*)

Also, please note that there are some validation rules built into the system. For example, date first case became ill cannot occur before date of initial exposure, and date last case became ill cannot occur before date of last exposure.

### Geographic Location

The “Geographic Location” section is used to report sites and location of exposure. When you are logged in, the “Reporting State” will automatically populate to your state.

If more than one state is involved in the outbreak, please indicate whether exposure occurred in multiple states or if exposure occurred in a single state and affected residents from multiple states. To select other involved states, hold down the control key and select all states involved. The same rule applies for affected counties.

For this example, CDC was the reporting state and exposure occurred in multiple states that were randomly chosen. (*Check the box for ‘Exposure occurred in multiple states’ and select a few states from the Other States list, at random*)

If it is known, enter the city/town/place of exposure in the text box provided; however do not include proprietary or private facility names here. (*Type “Anytown”*)

We are now at the end of the “General-Part 1” Tab.

At the bottom of each page, you can click “Save Changes” or you can click on the next tab. Clicking on the next tab will automatically save this page before proceeding to the next tab. However, if you are at the end of the report and do not need to click on another tab, you must click “Save Changes.” If you log out without either clicking on another tab or saving, the information on the last page will be lost. If you do not want to save the information on the page, click “Cancel.”

## TAB: GENERAL-PART 2

Click on the next tab - “General-Part 2”

### Number of Primary Cases

In the “Number of Primary Cases” section, enter the number of lab-confirmed primary cases, then probable primary cases. Here, let’s use an example where the “Estimated Total Primary Ill” is the sum of the lab-confirmed primary cases and the probable primary cases.

Next, enter information on the number of primary cases that died in the first column. In the second column of this row, enter the total number of cases for whom information is available. For this example, in the number “died” section, since none of our cases died, the numerator is “0,” and the denominator is 10 since we have information on whether someone died or not for 10 of our cases. Utilize the same method for the remaining categories – hospitalized (*Type 3, 10*), visited an emergency room (*Type 4, 9*), and visited a health care provider (excluding ER visits) (*Type 2, 7*).

### Sex

Next, in the “Sex” section, estimate the percent of total cases that were males and females. If you have percentages, please enter these percentages directly into the appropriate boxes. If you have counts, please enter the counts in the appropriate boxes and then click the “Calculate Sex Percentages” button. Please remember to click this button or the counts will be saved as percentages. For example, we will enter counts – 4 cases were male and 6 cases were female. Clicking on the “Calculate Sex Percentages” box gives us the correct percentage – 40% male and 60% female.

### Approximate Percentage of Primary Cases in Each Age Group

The “Approximate % of Primary Cases in Each Age Group” works the same way as the previous section. However in this example, we already have the percentages so we will enter the percentages directly into each age category. (*Type in fields for first column: 3, 0, 0, 17. Type in fields for second column: 65, 15, 0, 0*)

### Incubation Period

In the “Incubation Period” section, if incubation periods are unknown, then click the box “Unknown Incubation Period.”

If incubation periods are known, then enter the shortest, median, and longest incubation periods. Make sure to select the correct unit of time – minutes, hours, or days. For this example, the shortest incubation period was 2 days, the median was 6 days, and the longest was 10 days.

Then enter the number of cases for whom information regarding incubation period is available. For this example, we had information on incubation period for 9 cases.

### Duration of Illness

The “Duration of Illness” section works the same way as the Incubation Period section. If duration of illness is unknown, then click the box “Unknown Duration of Illness.”

If duration of illness is known, then enter the shortest, median, and longest duration of illness among cases that recovered. For this example, the shortest duration of illness was 3 days, the median was 7 days, and the longest was 12 days. For this example, we had information on duration of illness for 8 cases.

### Signs or Symptoms

In the “Signs or Symptoms” section, first start by clicking on the “Add Symptom” button.

In general, symptoms may be entered under the “Features” column in two ways: you can select the symptom from the list provided or you can add a new symptom.

To select from the list provided, click on the down arrow and the pick list will appear. You can start typing the first few letters of the symptom to help you find your selection. For example, start typing the letters “d-i-a-” and the selection will direct you to the word “Diarrhea.” Then enter the number of cases with this sign or symptom (the numerator) and then enter the number of cases for which you have symptom information available (the denominator). For this example, since 7 of our cases reported diarrhea, we would enter 7 for the numerator. The denominator is 8 since we have information on whether someone had diarrhea or not for 8 of our cases. After entering the numerator and denominator for a symptom, click on the “Save” button next to the symptom. Once saved to the symptoms table, you can edit and delete that symptom by clicking on the respective buttons.

To add another symptom to the table, click on the “Add Symptom” button.

If the symptom you want to enter is not available from the pick list, you can add a new symptom. However, before you try adding a new symptom, please double-check the pick list, as it is fairly exhaustive. For example, do not enter “Hair Loss” since “Alopecia” is already listed. To add an entirely new symptom, click on “Other,” and then type in the new symptom in the “Features” box. For example, if we were to add a new symptom “hives,” then to save this new symptom, we would click on “Ok.” Before saving, you have the option of cancelling the addition of the new symptom by clicking “Cancel.” Once added, this new symptom cannot be deleted from the pick list.

We are now at the end of the “General-Part 2” Tab. At bottom of this page, click “Save Changes.”

### **TAB: GENERAL-PART 3**

Click on the next tab - “General-Part 3”

#### Secondary Cases

If applicable, select the mode of secondary transmission. Again, to make multiple selections, hold down the control key and select all modes of secondary transmission involved. For this example, we selected person-to-person because it was a secondary mode of transmission.

In the “Number of Secondary Cases” section, enter the number of lab-confirmed secondary cases, then probable secondary cases. Let’s say that the “Estimated Total Secondary Ill” here will be the sum of the lab-confirmed secondary cases and the probable secondary cases. If there are no secondary cases, please enter “zero” anyway in each of the boxes above. *(Type in 7, 2 and 9)*

The Total # of Cases, which is the sum of Estimated Total Primary Ill (from General-Part 1) and Estimated Total Secondary Ill (from the section above) should auto-populate with the correct total upon saving and exiting this tab. *(Click on the General – Part 2 tab and click back on the General – Part 3 tab so that the Estimated Total Secondary Ill changes from 10 to 19)*

### EHS

If an EHS-Net Evaluation was conducted for this outbreak, enter the EHS-Net Evaluation ID number(s) in the spaces provided. Entering the IDs will link this outbreak report to the corresponding EHS-Net report. (Type “Eval\_1” in the first EHS-Net Evaluation ID field)

### Traceback

If a traceback was conducted, check the box, “Please check if trace back conducted.” To enter details about the traceback, click on the “Add Traceback” button. Enter the appropriate information in the following text boxes – source, source type, state, country, and comments. To save this traceback, click on “Save” directly to the left of the “source” box. Before saving, you have the option of cancelling the addition of a traceback by clicking “Cancel.” Once saved to the traceback table, you can edit and delete that traceback by clicking on the respective buttons. (Type “cattle ranch” for Source Type, select “Texas” from the State picklist, select “United States” from the Country picklist and type “led by Federal agency” in the Comments field)

### Recall

If a product was recalled, check the box, “Please check if any food or water product was recalled,” then enter in the details of the recall in the “Type of Item Recalled” box and the “Comments” box. (Type “ground beef” in the Type of Item Recalled field)

### Reporting Agency

The “Reporting Agency” section should already be pre-populated with the name and contact information of your state’s NORS administrator. Please keep this information updated.

### Remarks

In the “Remarks” section, briefly describe important aspects of the outbreak not covered in any of the other tabs. Please indicate if any adverse outcomes occurred in special populations (such as pregnant women, immunocompromised persons, or other). (Type “Two female cases were pregnant”)

This is the end of the “General-Part 3” tab. Click “Save Changes.”

## **TAB: GENERAL-LAB**

Click on the next tab – “General-Lab.”

The General-Lab tab is used for all reports except waterborne disease outbreak reports.

### Etiology Unknown

In the top box of the General-Lab tab, please answer yes or no for the “Etiology Known” question. If you checked “No,” then please answer the next question which is, “If no, were patient specimens collected?” If patient specimens were collected, then please enter a number for the question “If yes, how many specimens were collected?” Also, indicate what pathogens the specimens were tested for here. Again, to make multiple selections, hold down the control key and select all the relevant options. After entering all the questions in this box, click on the “Save Form” box.

### Etiology Workspace

However, if you checked, “Yes” to the “Etiology Known” question in the top box of the General-Lab tab, then utilize the etiology workspace to provide more details about the etiology.

First, click on the “New Row” button. Windows with genus, species and, if applicable, serotype will appear. Select the genus and then the corresponding species will appear in the next window. For *Salmonella*, the species will nearly always be *enterica*. Click *enterica* and then all of the *Salmonella* serotypes will appear. (*Select Aarhus as the serotype*)

If you have 2 or more lab-confirmed cases, or positive specimen from a food item, click on the checkbox for “Confirmed.” (*Check the “Confirmed” box*). Enter any other characteristics that may be applicable (such as antimicrobial resistance, phage type). To enter where the pathogen was detected, hold down the control key when making selections in the “Detected In” box to select all that apply. Enter in the number of lab-confirmed cases for this etiology. (*Type “11”*). Finally, click “Update Row” to save this etiology to the Etiology Workspace.

To add an additional etiology, click “New Row” and follow the previous steps. (*Add a new row of data and type “8” for the # of Lab-confirmed cases*)

To edit an etiology in the “Etiology Data Rows,” select your etiology by clicking on the button to the left of that etiology. Then make any necessary changes in the boxes of the “Etiology Workspace,” and then click “Update Row.” (*Change the number of cases in the second row of data from “8” to “9” and click “Update Row”*)

To delete an etiology in the “Etiology Data Rows,” select your etiology by clicking on the button to the left of that etiology and then click on the “Delete Row” button.

### Isolates

For bacterial pathogens, provide a representative isolate for each distinct pattern. Provide lab ID for all specimens submitted for viral sequencing.

To add an isolate, click “Edit.” In the State Lab ID, highlight and delete the default value, “Insert Lab ID” and enter an appropriate State Lab ID number. Then fill out the remaining columns for that line – “PulseNet Outbreak Code,” “CDC PulseNet Pattern Designation for Enzyme 1,” “CDC PulseNet Pattern Designation for Enzyme 2,” “Other Molecular Designation 1,” and “Other Molecular Designation 2.” Then click on “Update” to save that line of isolate information. Before saving, you have the option of cancelling the addition of an isolate by clicking “Cancel.” You can delete an isolate by clicking on “Delete” next to the corresponding row. (*Type in examples for all but the Other Molecular Designation fields*)

This is the end of the “General-Lab” tab.

## **TAB: ATTACH**

Click on the next tab - “Attach.”

You can attach a file by clicking on the “Browse” button and searching for the intended document. Select the document and then click the “Upload” button. Upon uploading, you can view the document by clicking on “Select.” To delete the attached file, click on “Delete.” To add an additional attachment, click “Browse” and follow the previous steps.

This is the end of the Attach tab.