

**U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Healthcare Safety Network Agreement to Participate and Consent  
Q&A**

**Q: What is the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) Agreement to Participate and Consent?**

**A:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) NHSN Agreement to Participate and Consent is a user agreement and data consent form required to use NHSN, the recognized gold-standard surveillance system for healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). Healthcare facilities and state health departments have been using NHSN for years to monitor HAIs and to prevent HAIs by directing prevention efforts toward appropriate areas of care.

**Q: Why am I receiving this package?**

**A:** Your facility recently requested permission to use NHSN to conduct surveillance of healthcare-associated infections. This request may be related to your facility's participation in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program, which now requires use of NHSN to report central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs) in order to receive the annual Medicare payment update.

**Q: What does this agreement say?**

The agreement provides information about data confidentiality and data access. The updated data access provisions allow hospital users to work closely with their respective health departments and to comply with new Medicare reporting requirements.

With respect to health department collaboration, the new provisions enable CDC to provide state health departments, at their request, with access to HAI data for surveillance and prevention purposes only ( for regulatory purposes). This will enable CDC to bring HAI prevention efforts into the traditional public health model, working closely with state health departments and healthcare facilities in their particular jurisdictions to reduce HAIs. States requesting data access beyond a state mandate will be required to enter into a signed data use agreement with CDC.

As part of CMS' elective pay-for-reporting program, CDC will share with CMS HAI data for hospitals that elect to participate in the CMS Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program. As you may know, this requires reporting of CLABSIs occurring in intensive care and neonatal intensive care unit patients on or after Jan. 1, 2011. Reporting of surgical site infections is scheduled to begin in 2012. As with all CMS healthcare quality measures, these statistics will be publicly reported on the Hospital Compare website.

Other than these purposes, CDC cannot release facility-level data to any person or organization.

**Q: What else should I know?**

**A:** Healthcare-associated infections are recognized as a significant measure of healthcare quality. There is a building sense of commitment and momentum toward eliminating these infections.

This new environment of quality promotion and transparency highlights the importance of a strong infection prevention program and enhances the role of healthcare epidemiologists and infection preventionists in overall facility performance. CDC recommends that healthcare facilities work closely, both at administrative and technical levels, with their respective state health departments to maximize prevention efforts and take advantage of mutually beneficial technical support and advocacy.