We provide the scientific service, expertise, skills, and tools to be at the forefront in providing the most up-to-date evidence-based information to improve public health. Our cross-cutting programs bring CDC’s scientific support services together to:

- Build a competent, sustainable, and empowered public health workforce.
- Improve the quality of laboratory testing and practices.
- Support programs and initiatives across CDC and throughout the nation’s public health system.
- Develop and maintain health information and disease-tracking systems.
- Be ready to respond to tomorrow’s health threats.
- Join CDC TRAIN, Every day, more than 100 learners join CDC TRAIN.
- Support state and local health systems closer together to improve coordinated care.
- Strengthen the system’s critical infrastructure.
- And activities that together form the backbone of much of CDC’s agency-wide Surveillance Strategy, the NNDSS.

CSELS is making critical investments in the public health workforces of today and of the future—for both short-term urgent needs and long-term capacity-building. As part of CDC’s laboratory safety initiative, we established the Laboratory Leadership Service. This new fellowship program develops early-career laboratory scientists for future leadership and management positions. To address other aspects of the changing healthcare landscape, our Population Health Workforce Initiative (PHWI) is building a competent corps of professionals to bridge the gap between individual care and population health. PHWI and fellowship that support it—like the Population Health Training in Place Program, Health Systems Integration Program, and Preventive Medicine Residency and Fellowship—bring health departments and health systems closer together to improve coordinated care.

Critical infrastructure upgrades are under way for a pillar of our public health system, NNDSS. Led by CSELS as part of CDC’s agency-wide Surveillance Strategy, the NNDSS Modernization Initiative aims to strengthen the system’s ability to provide more comprehensive, timely, and higher quality data on diseases and other health threats than ever before. In 2016, we assumed responsibility for another key critical investment in surveillance: the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS). The program develops early-career laboratory scientists for future leadership and management positions. To address other aspects of the changing healthcare landscape, our Population Health Workforce Initiative (PHWI) is building a competent corps of professionals to bridge the gap between individual care and population health. PHWI and fellowship that support it—like the Population Health Training in Place Program, Health Systems Integration Program, and Preventive Medicine Residency and Fellowship—bring health departments and health systems closer together to improve coordinated care.

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To the left-most column, there are icons of a globe, a magnifying glass, and a person. Underneath each icon, there is text that reads, “Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services.”

At the bottom, there is text that reads, “FOR MORE INFORMATION. Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services.”
CSELS programs are organized in a way that allows them to work towards shared goals and individual objectives. This strengthens CDC’s ability to serve its partners and stakeholders—within CDC and across the broader public health community.

Some of our programs have a long and robust history as flagship components of CDC, like the Communicable Disease Center, or CDC, which opened in 1946 with list of 41 diseases. The agency grew and is now responsible for overseeing the surveillance of millions of biological and environmental specimens, as well as samples that support genetic testing.

Other programs reflect the changing landscape of science and medicine. Our newest program, the CDC Learning Connection, or CDC Learning Connection, was launched in 2016 as a virtual platform that uses the latest technologies to optimize public health surveillance.

Our Programs

CSELS programs are organized around four strategic goals:

1. Transform the public health system
2. Prepare the public health workforce
3. Optimize operations
4. Organize partnerships

Our Priorities: CSELS activities are organized around four strategic goals

We lead a national surveillance strategy for human health, which builds on current resources, establishes priorities for next-generation technologies, and provides timely, comprehensive, and actionable information to protect the public’s health. We also develop standards for health information and strengthen the quality and safety of laboratory practice. Activities include

- Modernizing the NNDS and enhancing the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP)
- EpiViz®, a flexible, scalable, free software tool for public health practitioners and researchers worldwide
- Implementing the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA), which governs all healthcare-related laboratory testing performed on people in the United States
- Translating genome-based discoveries into practices to improve health.

We lead national efforts in scientific education and professional development to ensure researchers, technicians, healthcare providers, and communicators are ready to take our health system forward. We ensure that the people who keep the public healthy and safe have the guidance, products, and services to do their jobs better through

- Fellowships across a range of scientific and public health disciplines, for multiple educational levels and career stages
- Quality training opportunities and resources through platforms like the CDC Learning Connection and CDC TRAIN
- Timely evidence-based information published by MMWR and CDC Vital Signs
- A growing inventory of print, web-based, and digital resources designed to support laboratory capacity and competencies.

We build partnerships that teach all aspects of health. We create linkages among a range of partners and stakeholders—across CDC and other federal agencies, and in the scientific, health care, and public health communities. We’re a place where many perspectives intersect and where experts across disciplines can come to consensus to benefit the public’s health and safety. Key partners include

- Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
- Association of Public Health Laboratories
- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
- National Association of County and City Health Officials
- Other federal agencies such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and FDA

We maximize the center’s impact by recruiting and retaining dynamic leaders and expert staff. CSELS effectively manages how the center operates to improve internal performance through exemplary business service, innovative practice, and continuous workforce development. Activities include

- Supporting CSELS scientists and ensuring all research and data dissemination adheres to federal regulations and policies
- Setting standards and processes for high-quality communications products that promote the center’s efforts
- Organizing CSELS programs around shared policy priorities and strategies
- Managing the CSELS budget effectively, including our external funding portfolio that supports public health system, work force, and partners.

A Few Examples

- The Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) has been CDC’s primary scientific publication for more than 50 years, reporting first on public health problems such as Legionnaire’s disease and HIV/AIDS
- Our biosurveillance services manage and preserve CDC’s millions of biological and environmental specimens, as well as samples that support genetic testing
- The National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDS) allows public health partners to share information to monitor, control, and prevent diseases and other health threats.
- The CDC Learning Connection links public health professionals around the world with free, quality, accredited training resources from CDC partners, and other organizations.

Where We’ve Been:

1946
Communicable Disease Center, or CDC, opens in Atlanta
1951
EIS established as an emergency response team
1961
National disease tracking systems begin with list of 41 diseases
1968
CDC issues publication of MMWR—the “voice of CDC”
1996
Congress establishes Community Preventive Services Task Force
1997
Office of Public Health Genomics begins translating genetic discoveries into practice
2004
NNDSS Modernization Initiative begins, led by CSELS
2013
CELS launches Laboratory Leadership Service Relationship, modeled on EIS
2015
CSELS begins managing SDP With Shared Services
2016