

# Ultimate Guide for Site Administrators

## Community and Technical Resources

Compiled initially for site administrators, these are ideal resources for anyone involved in onboarding a facility or new to the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP).



**Expand Your Circle of Experts**—The [NSSP Community of Practice](#) (CoP) promotes individual growth and connects its members with problem solvers and experts in surveillance, analytics, informatics, and related areas. The NSSP CoP is facilitated through a cooperative agreement with the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE). Participation is voluntary, free of charge, independent of CSTE membership, and open to any person or organization interested in advancing syndromic surveillance.

- [Join the NSSP CoP](#)
- [Slack®](#) is a communication platform for sharing information with peers, planning projects, and accelerating data analyses. The NSSP Community of Practice Slack workspace is limited to staff employed by state, territorial, local, or tribal health departments and by federal agencies. [Join this Slack®](#) workspace to share information and solicit expert opinions.  
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### Core NSSP Community of Practice Resources

- [NSSP CoP Knowledge Repository \(KR\)](#): Community-developed resources include NSSP CoP call recordings and information on syndromes, data analytics, and syndromic surveillance.
- **New Site Onboarding Resources:**
  - [Kick Off: NSSP New Site Onboarding Window \(Fall 2020\) Webinar #1](#)
  - [Data Flow and Data Quality: NSSP New Site Onboarding Window \(Fall 2020\) Webinar #2](#)
  - [AMC and ESSENCE Orientation: NSSP New Site Onboarding Window \(Fall 2020\) Webinar #3](#)
- **State and Local Public Health Department Information:**
  - [State links to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Promoting Interoperability Programs](#)
  - [State public health websites and syndromic surveillance websites](#) (scroll to bottom of page)
- [NSSP CoP Groups](#) (meeting [calendar](#)):
  - [NSSP CoP Monthly Call](#): Calls promote knowledge sharing, training, innovation, and timely exchange of syndromic data among state and local public health agencies and partners. **Join to learn** what's relevant to the syndromic surveillance community (routine and emergency surveillance) and to hear expert presentations.
  - [Syndrome Definition \(SD\) Subcommittee](#): The SD Subcommittee creates, evaluates, and refines syndrome definitions, links users with similar syndrome definition needs, and documents these processes. **Join to learn** the best practices for creating syndrome definitions. For examples, see the [Syndrome Definition Library in the Knowledge Repository](#).
  - [Syndromic Surveillance and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Response and Recovery Subcommittee \(SPHERR\) Subcommittee](#): SPHERR integrates syndromic surveillance data and

information into emergency preparedness and response activities. **Join to learn** from a network of experts about events of national interest (extreme weather, mass gatherings, etc.).

- [Data Quality \(DQ\) Subcommittee](#): The DQ Subcommittee fosters relationships across groups involved in syndromic data messaging. **Join to learn** how data quality issues are resolved and hear presentations by external stakeholders.
- [Technical Workgroup](#): This subcommittee facilitates communication between CDC NSSP and the syndromic surveillance community. **Join to learn** how data management, analysis, visualization, and reporting needs are being met.
- [NSSP–ESSENCE User Group](#): This is an open forum for discussion and getting answers to technical questions. **Join to learn** about ESSENCE functions and features.
- [NSSP R User Group](#): **Join to learn** about NSSP R-specific functions and features.

**NSSP Syndromic Surveillance Symposium:** This annual, multi-day event offers a community forum in which members exchange experiences and share best practices. Learn innovative solutions and strategies for advancing syndromic surveillance practice. Recordings available for [2020](#) and [2021](#).

## Core CDC NSSP Resources

- [National Syndromic Surveillance Program website](#)
- NSSP Data in Action:
  - [NSSP-related articles and more](#)
  - [Success stories](#): Diverse ways to use syndromic data that are replicable and scalable.
  - [Using dashboards to present NSSP data](#): Examples of dashboards developed by CDC, partners, and state and local public health departments. Includes state- and locally developed reports.
- [NSSP Technical Resource Center](#):
  - [User Manual for the Access & Management Center \(AMC\)](#)
    - [Quick Start Guide to Using the AMC Data Access Rules](#)
  - [User Manual for the Data Quality Dashboard](#)
  - [User Manual for the Data-Quality-on-Demand Programs](#)
  - [User Manual for RStudio Workbench](#)
  - [User Manual for SAS Studio](#)
  - [Quick Start Guide to Using ESSENCE](#)
  - [Quick Start Guide to Using the Master Facility Table \(MFT\)](#)
  - [Quick Start Guide to Using the Daily Site Processing Summary](#)
    - [Access the NSSP Data Dictionary](#)
    - [Data Dictionary: Data Elements Used in NSSP Data Processing Journey Handout](#)

More questions? Contact...

### [NSSP's Service Desk](#)

Once you set up an account, you can request technical and administrative assistance. NSSP's support teams provide one-on-one consultation on data quality, onboarding (including SFTP and Master Facility Table), ESSENCE, and more.

The NSSP support team can reset passwords, explain how to use data access rules, demonstrate the use of data quality dashboards, point you toward resources, and connect you with subject experts and potential collaborators.

## Links You'll Want to Bookmark

- [Technical Resource Center](#): Also accessible from the [NSSP home page](#), the Technical Resource Center is your portal to the BioSense Platform, Knowledge Repository, and Community of Practice. From here, you can access technical publications and standards, *NSSP Update* (monthly newsletter), and articles that use NSSP data. Find examples of dashboards, get technical tips and training, visit the Data Quality Corner, and get answers to technical questions. For fun, see the free-text query word clouds.
- [Onboarding](#): Links to onboarding resources.
- [NSSP Update Newsletter: Current Issue and Archives](#)
- [Helpful Articles](#): The tips in these two articles should be followed daily: [Are the Lights On? Here's How NSSP Monitors Data Flow](#) and [How to Use the Data Quality \(DQ\) Dashboard](#).

## NSSP–ESSENCE: Education and Need-to-Know Info

- ESSENCE 101 Training Package:
  - ESSENCE Overview Published in *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*: "[Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-Based Epidemics \(ESSENCE\): Overview, Components, and Public Health Applications](#)"
  - [CDC NSSP–ESSENCE In-Person Training Workshop \(Student Packet\)](#): Provides an overview of ESSENCE history, basic and advanced system components, alerting algorithms, and chief complaint processor.
  - [BioSense Platform Quick Start Guide to Using ESSENCE](#)
  - [NSSP–ESSENCE User Group Call Recordings](#)
- [ESSENCE Online Training Course](#): Your browser **MUST allow Flash** to run this 7-session course.
  1. How to Use the ESSENCE Online Training
  2. Overview of ESSENCE and Syndromic Surveillance
  3. Basic ESSENCE System Components
  4. Advanced ESSENCE System Components
  5. Scenario Based Example
  6. Chief Complaint Processor
  7. ESSENCE Alerting Algorithms

### What does a site administrator do?

Site administrators are liaisons between NSSP participants and data providers. A site administrator can approve and remove user access to applications, set data-sharing preferences and rules, and assist with passwords and licenses. Site administrators are expected to inform team members of new program guidance, publications, and tools.

**Roles and responsibilities** are listed in Section 3.3 of the [New Facility Onboarding Guide for the BioSense Platform](#) and in Section 3.4 of the [New Site Onboarding Guide for the BioSense Platform](#).

Chapter 11 of the [BioSense Platform User Manual for the Access & Management Center](#) lists common activities that site admins are responsible for (e.g., view/edit user profiles, request licenses, etc.), as described in the Code of Conduct agreement.

## ■ Tool-Specific ESSENCE Tutorials

- [ESSENCE Video Series](#)
- [ESSENCE – Query Wizard](#)
- [ESSENCE – myESSENCE](#)
- [ESSENCE – myAlerts](#)
- [ESSENCE – Data Details](#)
- [ESSENCE – Algorithms](#)
- [ESSENCE – Advanced Query](#)
- [ESSENCE – Time Series Viewer](#)
- [ESSENCE – Free Text Query](#)
- [ESSENCE – Free Text Query Negation](#)

## ■ Building, Using, and Sharing Queries ESSENCE Trainings

- [Building Queries](#)
- [Using Queries](#)
- [Sharing Queries](#)

## ■ Free-Text Coding Series: How to Write ESSENCE Free-Text Queries

- [Part 1. Wildcards](#)
- [Part 2. Underscores \\_ and Brackets \[.\]](#)
- [Part 3. Inclusionary Terms](#)
- [Part 4. Exclusion Terms and Parentheses](#)
- [Part 5. A “Starter” Fall-related Injury Query and Examples of Complex Queries](#)
- [Part 6. Wrapping Things Up](#)
- [Part 7. Additional Tips for ISBLANK and ISNULL](#)
- [Part 8. Additional Tips: !TERM! Syntax](#)

## ■ ESSENCE Q&As (recorded sessions from NSSP–ESSENCE User Group meetings)

- [Q&A v7.0](#)—April 2021
- [Q&A v6.0](#)—July 2020
- [Q&A v5.0](#)—June 2019
- [Q&A v4.0](#)—March 2019
- [Q&A v3.0](#)—September 2018
- [Q&A v2.0](#)—March 2018
- [Q&A v1.0](#)—November 2017

## ■ Environmental Data Sources

- [CDC National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#): Nationwide network of integrated health and environmental data
- [Weather Data](#): Collected from the National Weather Service Form 6, stratified across all weather stations in the United States
- [Using Weather and Environmental Data in ESSENCE](#): Guidance on how to use environmental data sources, produced by the Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division

- **Non-Informative Chief Complaint and Discharge Diagnosis terms:**  
“””, ‘null’, ‘unknown’, ‘unk’, ‘n/a’, ‘na’, ‘Chief complaint not present’, ‘ed visit’, ‘ed’, ‘er’, ‘Advice only’, ‘Other’, ‘xxx’, ‘Evaluation’, ‘Follow up’, ‘medical’, ‘illness’, ‘General’, ‘General symptom’, ‘EMS’, ‘AMR’, ‘Medic’, ‘Ambulance’, ‘EMS/Arrived by’, ‘EMS/Ambulance’, ‘;’, ‘;;’, ‘Triage’, ‘Triage peds’, ‘Triage-’, ‘Triage peds-’, ‘See chief complaint quote’, ‘See CC quote’, ‘Sick’, ‘Injury’, ‘ill’, ‘Eval’, ‘squad’, ‘Referral’, ‘Code 1’, ‘Code 3’, ‘follow-up’, ‘CHECK’

*These terms are listed in the [NSSP Data Dictionary](#), Tab 9 "NICC Terms."*

- **Community-built ESSENCE Resources**
  - [Indiana Epidemiology and ESSENCE User Guide](#)
  - [Kansas—Working with ESSENCE](#)
  - [Oregon ESSENCE Training and Tools](#)
  - [Learn about Washington State Department of Health’s Rapid Health Information Network \(RHINO\)](#)
  - [Working with RHINO: A Handbook for Using Syndromic Surveillance Data in Washington State](#)

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