



July 2016

Welcome to *NSSP Update*

NSSP Update provides monthly news about the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP). NSSP embodies collaboration, particularly in the development of its BioSense Platform, a secure cloud-based computing environment that hosts standardized, shared tools to rapidly collect, evaluate, store, and share data. *NSSP Update* will keep you in touch with the latest advancement in the platform’s development.

If a colleague forwarded this issue to you, we encourage you to [subscribe at this link](#) to ensure that you receive future issues.

NSSP Achieves Operational Readiness

NSSP met one of its most critical milestones in June: Operational Readiness. Our thanks to everyone who contributed to this achievement—from members of the NSSP team and BioSense Governance Group to partner organizations and community participants. “Operational readiness” means that our new flow of data into ESSENCE can go live on schedule.

User Acceptance Testing Completed

On June 15, NSSP completed User Acceptance Testing (UAT) of the Access & Management Center (AMC) and ESSENCE with Phase II participants. Overall, users found the AMC intuitive and easy to use. Still, there’s a learning curve for users new to ESSENCE. With training, updated documentation, and practice, users will be able to use the system’s full functionality with relative ease. Some bugs were identified that will be fixed before the new system goes live. The NSSP Team appreciates the participants’ feedback and will use their suggestions to enhance the system’s overall functionality.

BioSense Platform Tools

Once NSSP begins transitioning sites to the ESSENCE application on July 18, 2016, users can begin using it and other tools hosted on the BioSense Platform to analyze public health indicators. ESSENCE, developed by Johns Hopkins University (JHU), is used by many practitioners in the syndromic surveillance community. ESSENCE captures data in multiple formats, parses text strings into syndrome groups, and applies multiple detection algorithms. Most importantly, NSSP’s version of ESSENCE will enable users to collaborate with others across geopolitical boundaries to share data, improving upon the accuracy of their surveillance picture.

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The BioSense Platform will host several versatile tools*:

- **ESSENCE** for capturing, analyzing, storing, and sharing data. ESSENCE is designed for site administrators and users with a range of data analysis skills from minimal to expert but with a clear understanding of their site's data.
- **Adminer** for views into and basic queries of MS SQL data stored on the BioSense Platform. Adminer is designed for site administrators with advanced SQL skills who want to get a quick peek at how the data flow and updates perform.
- **Access & Management Center (AMC)** for assigning rights, access control, and data-sharing privileges to ESSENCE (and eventually other platform tools). Both users and site administrators may use the AMC, with site administrators having access to additional features that will help them facilitate how users share data.
- **R Studio Professional** for additional analysis of data beyond what might be available through ESSENCE.

Other tools and data sources will be evaluated for inclusion on the BioSense Platform soon.

*See the *Quick Start Guide* for a description of the tools, log-in instructions, and tips for performing basic functions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 28–July 15, 2016** Transition kick-off meetings with pilot sites
August 3, 2016 "Go Live" date for Phase II participants

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UPDATES

- On June 15, 2016, NSSP completed User Acceptance Testing (UAT) of the Access & Management Tool and ESSENCE.
- The *Onboarding Guide to the BioSense Platform* has been posted on the onboarding website.
- A *BioSense Platform Quick Start Guide* is being developed. Once completed, it will be provided to users so that they can familiarize themselves with the platform tools.

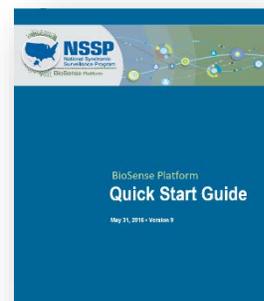


PHASE III SCHEDULE AND UPDATE: TRANSITION TO ESSENCE

The Phase 3 Transition Schedule to ESSENCE and the activities involved are shown below. Every 4 weeks, nine sites will transition. The NSSP team will conduct two webinars with each set of sites. The first webinar will orient system users to the transition plan and Adminer (an SQL tool for viewing MS SQL data in the BioSense Platform Archive). The second webinar will introduce the Access & Management Center and ESSENCE.

If your site anticipates a schedule conflict, please contact <http://support.syndromicsurveillance.org>.

A *BioSense Platform Quick Start Guide* will be available to help you navigate the platform tools to conduct routine syndromic surveillance or review data. During the transition, the NSSP Team will schedule conference calls to answer questions and share information.



Phase 3 Transition Schedule (updated 5/4/2016)	Week 29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52
	18-Jul — 22-Jul	25-Jul — 29-Jul	1-Aug — 5-Aug	8-Aug — 12-Aug	15-Aug — 19-Aug	22-Aug — 26-Aug	29-Aug — 2-Sep	5-Sep — 9-Sep	12-Sep — 16-Sep	19-Sep — 23-Sep	26-Sep — 30-Sep	3-Oct — 7-Oct	10-Oct — 14-Oct	17-Oct — 21-Oct	24-Oct — 28-Oct	31-Oct — 4-Nov	7-Nov — 11-Nov	14-Nov — 18-Nov	21-Nov — 25-Nov	28-Nov — 2-Dec	5-Dec — 9-Dec	12-Dec — 16-Dec	19-Dec — 23-Dec	26-Dec — 30-Dec
Illinois (includes Cook) / Massachusetts / Kentucky / Arizona / Mississippi / Arkansas / West Virginia / Kansas / Houston, TX																								
Nevada / Utah / New Mexico / Denver Public Health / Riverside, CA / Idaho / North Dakota / Montana / Alaska																								
Stanislaus, CA / Linn County, IA / Santa Clara, CA / Nevada, CA / Florida / Ohio / Pennsylvania / New York / North Carolina																								
Georgia / New York City / New Jersey / Indiana / Tarrant County TX / Missouri / Louisiana / Maryland / Washington																								
Oklahoma / Minnesota / Connecticut / South Carolina / Oregon / Maine / Nebraska / New Hampshire / Rhode Island																								
Boston Public Health Commission / County of Sacramento, CA / District of Columbia / Delaware / San Diego, CA / Hawaii / Vermont / South Dakota / San Mateo, CA																								

Weekly Transition Activities (updated 4/29/2016)		
Week 1	Weeks 2 and 3	Week 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CDC presents transition plan and conducts orientation to Adminer ▪ Users access Adminer to view new BioSense Platform Archive ▪ Users confirm accuracy of Master Facility Table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CDC leads orientation to the Access & Management Center (AMC) and ESSENCE ▪ Users set up accounts and data access via AMC ▪ Users learn ESSENCE functionality and use it to visualize syndromic surveillance data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sites transition to production (new) data flow ▪ CDC begins converting legacy data from BioSense 2.0 front-end application to BioSense Platform Archive and into ESSENCE

ONBOARDING

Onboarding Page Live

Attention site administrators—Updates and new info are available to ensure your data are high quality and that feeds to the BioSense Platform are timely and efficient. If your site plans to add facilities and validate data, access forms (e.g., Data Compliance Report template, Feed Profile Template, BioSense Platform Onboarding Process Site Acknowledgment), or get general guidance, [visit the updated onboarding website](#).

Data Validation Support

Conference calls are held every Thursday, 1:00 pm–3:00 pm, to assist with data validation compliance. For more information or to download a copy of the template that’s needed to validate data, contact the service desk:

<http://support.syndromicsurveillance.org>.

Onboarding Support

Conference calls are held every Tuesday, 1:00 pm–3:00 pm, to discuss the process and answer questions in a group forum. Requests received throughout the preceding week will be discussed during this call.



The *Onboarding Guide* is available on the onboarding website.

BioSense Governance Group Meets in Atlanta, Georgia

For the first time in two years, the BioSense Governance Group (BGG) met in person to recap the previous year (review functional requirements and progress) and look ahead at further developing NSSP's BioSense Platform.

The BGG convened in Atlanta, Georgia, May 18–19, 2016, on the heels of the first 2016 NSSP Grantees meeting. Thus, the BGG members discussed takeaways from the grantee meeting, too, including how to move forward on data quality, particularly the collaborative aspects; the need for training in syndromic surveillance, given about half the attendees at the grantee meeting had only 4 years or less experience in syndromic surveillance; and the importance of data quality for strengthening the practice of syndromic surveillance and for ensuring its sustainability. For details, see the [BGG May 2016 meeting notes](#).

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE UPDATES

DHIS Awards Cooperative Agreement for NSSP Community of Practice

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Health Informatics and Surveillance, has awarded the International Society for Disease Surveillance (ISDS) a three-year cooperative agreement to develop, implement, and maintain a community of practice for CDC's National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP).



NSSP's Community of Practice (NSSP CoP), which promotes the use and practice of syndromic surveillance, will provide a peer-to-peer collaborative environment to foster and facilitate knowledge sharing and partnership. Working together, CDC, ISDS, stakeholders, and community members can leverage the talents of a broad range of public health practitioners to enhance the nation's syndromic surveillance capacity.

Funding will support development, implementation, promotion, and ongoing maintenance of the NSSP CoP through activities such as:

1. Developing and maintaining a content management system and knowledge repository.
2. Developing and delivering a variety of training and knowledge-sharing events and activities.
3. Establishing a steering committee to lead and guide the CoP.
4. Developing a process for peer-to-peer mentoring and coaching.
5. Identifying methods to share success stories and measure the value and success of the CoP.

eSHARE EVENTS

- CSTE Annual Meeting Highlights: **7/21/2016**; <https://virtualsepd.adobeconnect.com/nmieshare>
- PHI Conference: **8/21–24/2016**; <http://phiconference.org/>

ARCHIVE OF NSSP UPDATE

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