



## Lessons Learned

Pilot testing provided the opportunity to build interagency working relationships while developing best practices for sharing data. The pilot:

- Helped district health epidemiologists understand how the Department of Defense manages reportable conditions; and
- Helped the Department of Defense understand disease trends outside of an installation. That understanding can inform and better prepare military health personnel to respond to outbreaks and emerging infectious disease.

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The findings and conclusions of this report are those of the authors and do not reflect the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This success story shows how NSSP

- ✓ Improves Data Representativeness
- ✓ Improves Data Quality, Timeliness, and Use
- ✓ Strengthens Syndromic Surveillance Practice
- ✓ Informs Public Health Action or Response

## DoD and Virginia Department of Health Collaborate on Data Sharing Pilot

### Public Health Problem

The Department of Defense (DoD) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) participate in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP). As part of NSSP, DoD and VDH use ESSENCE\* to conduct syndromic surveillance, which improves situational awareness and enhances responsiveness to hazardous events and disease outbreaks. Although both DoD and VDH use ESSENCE to monitor the health status of their military and civilian populations, respectively, the agencies had not shared syndromic data for geographic locations where the two populations overlap. To protect the health of both populations, public health practitioners needed a better understanding of disease trends affecting military installations and civilian communities.

### Actions Taken

In collaboration with the NSSP team, DoD and VDH launched a pilot project in June 2018 to develop processes and procedures for data sharing, data access, and communication. Their aim was to develop best practices that public health jurisdictions, including those with military installations, could use to share syndromic surveillance data with DoD.

### Outcome

The NSSP data sharing pilot project enabled DoD and civilian syndromic surveillance data to be visible in the same system for the first time. The ability to share data increased disease surveillance and awareness of public health events occurring in the community.

VDH gained understanding about how DoD operates and reinforced existing working relationships. This pilot enhanced VDH's ability to see *potential* reportable-condition cases that might not have been reported to local public health authorities. One key success of the pilot occurred when the DoD alerted local health department colleagues of an outbreak of influenza-like illness at an elementary school on a military installation. The data sharing allowed both to visualize and monitor the event in near-real time while providing context of illness levels in the local community. VDH and DoD worked together to support the school by continued monitoring for influenza-like illness in the surrounding county and providing guidance to the school via recommended control measures.

Future plans on expanding data sharing to other states will commence once DoD has transitioned fully to the latest version of ESSENCE. The ability to view both DoD and civilian health encounter data in the same system is a monumental step in responding promptly to outbreaks and emerging infectious disease that affect both populations.

\*Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics