



Improving Public Health Surveillance

Background

CDC's goal for federally supported surveillance activities is to get the right information into the right hands at the right time. A strategic plan to improve surveillance at CDC was launched in February 2014 to better achieve this goal.

The Challenge

In the United States, gathering surveillance data is a shared effort between CDC and thousands of agencies at the federal and state, territorial, local, and tribal levels. States have primary responsibility for disease reporting and share anonymized data with CDC. At the same time, CDC maintains more than 100 surveillance systems for different uses, which creates a reporting burden and duplication of effort for partners, discrepancies among the data elements, and the need to use multiple information technology (IT) systems.

Our Strategy

Our strategic plan for surveillance focused on what CDC must do to make greater use of established data standards, decrease unnecessary redundancies and reporting burdens on state and local health departments, and reduce the number of stand-alone systems. Along with our partners, we continue to address ongoing challenges as well as broader health data issues to meet a changing landscape confronting the agency and public health.

Moving the Dial

As part of this work, four initiatives were identified as areas for improvement: notifiable diseases, syndromic surveillance, mortality reporting, and electronic laboratory reporting. Real progress has been made in meeting, or exceeding, the metrics that were set in these areas. This progress touches all of CDC, states, and many other partners. Additionally, the strategy prompted new strategic priorities that were developed along the way, including efforts toward building a surveillance data platform and supporting electronic case reporting at the local level.