



March, 14, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

CDC has launched a new surveillance strategy for improving the agency's activities in public health surveillance. The CDC Surveillance Strategy aims to improve CDC's overall surveillance capabilities and, by extension, those of the public health system at large. The strategy guides efforts to make essential surveillance systems more adaptable to the rapidly changing technology landscape, more versatile in meeting demands for expanding knowledge about evolving threats to health, and more able to meet the demands for timely and population-specific and geographic-specific surveillance information. The strategy will also facilitate work to consolidate systems, eliminate unnecessary redundancies in reporting, and reduce reporting burden.

The three major goals of the CDC Surveillance Strategy are to

1. enhance the accountability, resource use, workforce, and innovation for surveillance at CDC and in support of state, tribal, local, and territorial agencies;
2. accelerate the utilization of emerging tools and approaches to improve the availability, quality, and timeliness of surveillance data; and
3. improve surveillance by addressing data availability, system usability, redundancies, and incorporation of new information technologies in major systems or activities.

The National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) Modernization Initiative (NMI) is one of four proposed initiatives to address goal number three.

Managed by the Division of Health Informatics and Surveillance (DHIS) in CDC's Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services, NNDSS is a nationwide collaboration that enables all levels of public health (local, state, territorial, federal, and international) to share health information to monitor, control, and prevent the occurrence and spread of state-reportable and nationally notifiable infectious and some noninfectious diseases and conditions. NNDSS is a multifaceted program that includes the surveillance system for collection, analysis, and sharing of health data and also policies, laws, electronic messaging standards, people, partners, information systems, processes, and resources at the local, state, and national levels.

With the evolution of technology and data and exchange standards, CDC now has the opportunity to strengthen and modernize the infrastructure supporting this important public health surveillance system. As part of the CDC Surveillance Strategy, the NNDSS Modernization Initiative is underway to enhance the system's surveillance capabilities to provide more comprehensive, timelier, and higher quality data than ever before for public health decision making. Through this multi-year initiative, CDC seeks to increase the robustness of the NNDSS technological infrastructure so that it is based on interoperable, standardized data and exchange mechanisms. NMI is planned for 5 years with short-term deliverables (0–12 months) and long-term activities (2–5 years).

NMI comprises three principal components:

1. development of prioritized Message Mapping Guides (MMGs) for case notification;
2. development of the CDC Platform (CDC-P), a data and software platform that will allow CDC programs to receive, process, store, access, share, and analyze health-related data, including electronic health record data, on a unified platform; and
3. technical assistance for implementation of MMGs in reporting jurisdictions.

DHIS and subject matter experts from programs within the CDC Office of Infectious Diseases are collaborating on the development of the MMGs and have prioritized six MMGs for implementation in the first year of this initiative (January 2014 to January 2015). The six MMGs are a Generic Guide v.2, STD, Hepatitis, Congenital Syphilis, Pertussis, and Mumps Guides. These disease areas cover the largest volume of data collected in NNDSS.

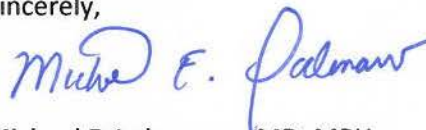
When these MMGs are completed, technical assistance will be provided to selected state and local jurisdictions to help them adopt the MMGs and send test case notification messages to the CDC-P to ensure that these messages are properly received, processed, and stored for analysis. Once this pilot phase is completed, all jurisdictions will be invited to adopt the MMGs.

NMI is an ambitious and multifaceted initiative that will strengthen and enhance reporting and use of notifiable diseases data for reporting jurisdictions and the public health programs that depend on these important data. Effective planning, collaboration, and communication are crucial for the success of a project with the complexity and scope as large as NMI.

As we move forward, we will provide more information. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact Anna Grigoryan, MD, PhD; project manager for NMI; at ffg7@cdc.gov or 404-498-6071.

We look forward to engaging you in this important initiative that, through our collaboration, will pave the way for public health surveillance in the future.

Sincerely,



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CDC National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System Modernization Initiative

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