# DSHS Public Health Informatics & Data Unit
# INSIDER

**January 2024**

# WELCOME

On behalf of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Public Health Informatics and Data Unit (PHID), we would like to warmly wish you a very happy new year and welcome you to our newsletter!

The aim of this newsletter is to share important news and timely updates related to electronic laboratory reporting and electronic case reporting of notifiable conditions to laboratory reporting facilities in Texas. Our goal is to enhance communication and ensure that you are aware of key updates, opportunities, and tools available to assist your facility in data submission.

Data submitted from laboratory facilities to PHID serves as critical information to public health staff and leadership across the great state of Texas. PHID is home to the Texas National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS). Epidemiologists and surveillance staff utilize this important information to identify cases needing follow up, conducting disease investigations, implementing prophylactic measures as appropriate, and to control and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

We thank you for your continued partnership and collaboration!

## Introduction to the DSHS Public Health Informatics Data (PHID) Unit

Public health informatics is the systematic application of information, computer science, and technology to public health practice, research, and learning to improve the health of individuals and communities. The PHID Unit serves as the primary connection point for providers, health care facilities, and laboratories who submit electronic laboratory reports and electronic case reports for Texas notifiable conditions. PHID serves a critical function in serving as a platform where public health surveillance, epidemiology, medical data, and informatics converge to develop key metrics that inform and guide epidemiologists and surveillance staff as well as public health leadership.

PHID is comprised of the following areas with subject matter experts:
- Electronic Laboratory Reporting and Electronic Case Reporting Onboarding and Validations,
- Helpdesk and Customer Support/Communications,
- Data Analytics and Quality Assurance,
- Data Integration and Interoperability,
- Health Level 7 International (HL7),
- National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS) Base System (NBS) System Design and Implementation Team.

PHID processes essential data on infectious diseases 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The critical work conducted through PHID never ceases and is constantly ongoing to inform public health staff and key decision makers who monitor disease levels in their communities. The processed data includes laboratory information on over 100 different infectious diseases that have the potential to trigger large scale outbreaks if not identified early and controlled to reduce further spread.

PHID team serves the entire state of Texas as a direct connection to thousands of providers, laboratories, and healthcare facilities across Texas as well as throughout the nation. We value the partnership that we share with all of you as we work together to improve the health of all Texans.

## Announcements

### Electronic Laboratory Report (ELR) Onboarding
DSHS has resumed ELR onboarding efforts for all notifiable conditions. Facilities who have not completed the process of onboarding for all notifiable condition ELRs to DSHS should contact idi@dshs.texas.gov.

### DSHS Laboratory Survey Coming Soon
DSHS is planning to administer a survey of laboratories submitting test results in early 2024. The purpose of the survey is to ascertain updated point of contact information and any changes to lab facility information. The survey will also assess changes in tests performed and information on reference laboratories being utilized. Please be on the lookout for that survey in early 2024. We appreciate your assistance with the survey completion.

### Declaration of Readiness for Electronic Case Reporting
As of September 1, 2023, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is ready to accept electronic case reporting (eCR) to fulfill Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Promoting Interoperability Program requirements. All critical access hospitals (CAHs) and eligible hospitals (EHs) as defined by CMS are required to submit eCR to DSHS. For more information on eCR and onboarding requirements, please visit the DSHS Electronic Case Reporting page.

### ATTENTION: CSV Submitters
The Comma Separated Values (CSV) line-level reporting format may be used by jurisdictions to submit COVID-19 lab data. Since the CARES Act and the Governor's mandate are no longer in effect, our reporting guidelines for reporting COVID-19 test results have been updated. As of June 2023, facilities should only report positive COVID-19 PCR and antigen results. Please refrain from reporting any negative COVID-19 test results and antibody results. Thank you for your facility's continued commitment to report COVID-19 laboratory test results.

## Announcements Cont.

**Requesting Attestation from DSHS**

Healthcare organizations seeking attestation from DSHS to demonstrate compliance with CMS Promoting Interoperability Program requirements for ELR and eCR should submit those requests to the following link Attestation Request Form (smartsheet.com).

Please note that effective in 2024, DSHS will grant attestation Active Engagement Option 1 for healthcare organizations onboarded for COVID-19 ELR only and meeting all reporting requirements. Healthcare organizations who are fully onboarded for all reportable disease ELR conditions and meeting all reporting requirements will be granted Active Engagement Option 2. Also, DSHS will begin formally granting attestation for eCR on March 1, 2024.

**Globalscape Managed File Transfer (MFT) platform**

DSHS has recently migrated all 1,677 reporting laboratories from the legacy secure file transfer protocol (sFTP) solution to the new enterprise-class Globalscape MFT platform. Globalscape offers greater security and control than our previous solution and also provides better flexibility in handling test and production modes along with inbound and outbound data transfers. We would like to thank all of our laboratory testing partners for your assistance in making this migration possible.

For testing facilities that utilize file transfer automation, we highly recommend that you establish a key-based access method with DSHS. By doing so, your password will remain in effect for 2 years vs. 90 days for normal user-based connectivity. For more information, please contact Nadja Garcia at nadja.garcia@dshs.texas.gov.

## Contact Us

- For questions on COVID-19 lab registration, onboarding, resubmitting corrections, and technical assistance please send email to **COVID-19ELR@dshs.texas.gov**

- For questions on informatics in general or questions on HL7-related matters, please send correspondence to **IDI@dshs.texas.gov**

- For questions on eCR, please contact: **TexasECR@dshs.texas.gov**

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