

# DSHS Public Health Informatics & Data Unit **INSIDER**

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Welcome to the first  
edition of the DSHS PHID  
**INSIDER!**

## WELCOME

On behalf of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Public Health Informatics and Data Unit (PHID), we would like to warmly welcome you to our first issue of the **PHID INSIDER**.

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 as we all work toward our shared goal of eliminating COVID-19.



## 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 in order 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. PHID serves 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.

## USDS Free Software for Reporting COVID-19 Point-of-Care Tests

The CDC is offering a free reporting software tool, *SimpleReport*, that aims to make it easier for COVID-19 testing facilities to record results for rapid point-of-care tests and quickly report required data to the Texas Department of State Health Services. For more information on *SimpleReport*, go to <https://simplereport.cdc.gov/>. Terms of service for *SimpleReport* can be found at <https://simplereport.cdc.gov/terms-of-service/>. *SimpleReport* software is made available free of charge to eligible facilities who are selected.

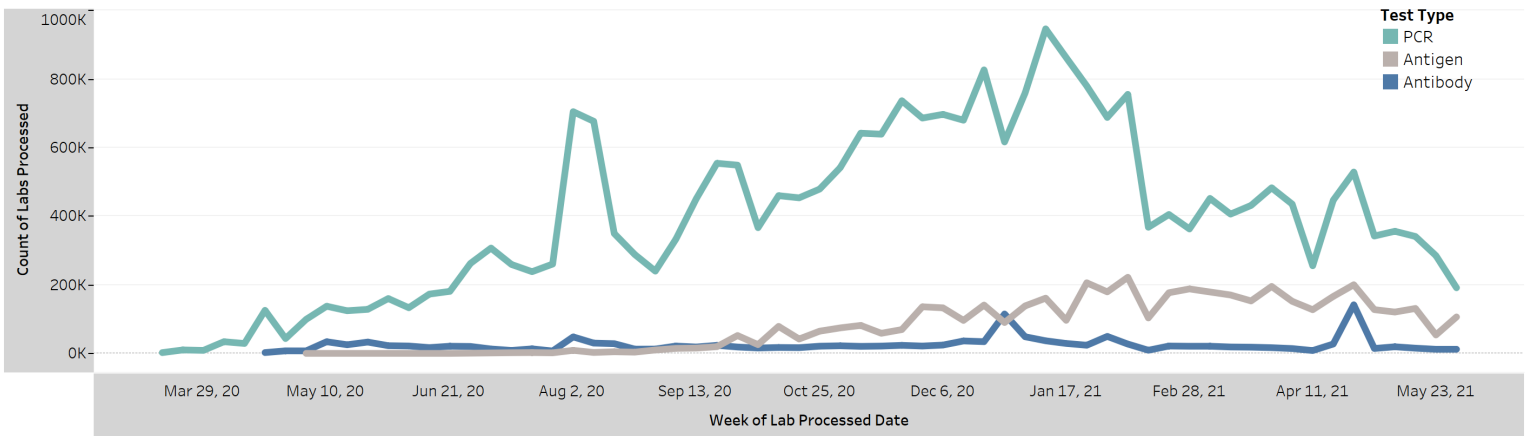
To be considered eligible, facilities must meet the following criteria:

1. Facility is NOT reporting to DSHS via Health Level 7 (HL7) international standards AND
2. Facility primarily conducts in-house/on-site Point-of-Care (POC) COVID-19 testing AND
3. Facility captures results by manual entry into Excel spreadsheet (submitted as CSV Template) AND
4. Facility wants to participate in a free pilot project providing free software to assist your facility in reporting COVID-19 lab results to DSHS.

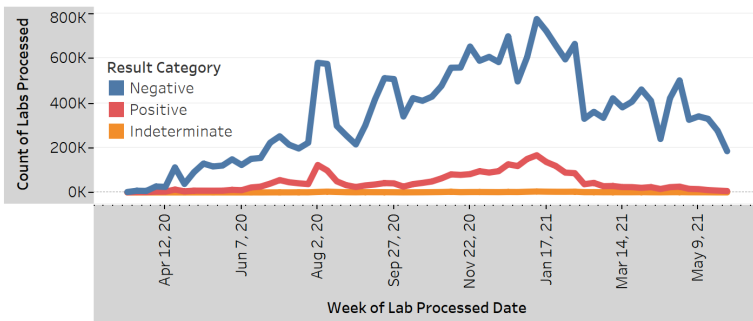
If your facility meets the criteria listed above and needs a way to improve capture and reporting for POC testing, please [complete this survey](#). We will conduct further follow up with eligible facilities who complete and submit the survey.

## Count of SARS-CoV-2 Labs Processed via PHID by Test Type and Week of Lab Processed Date

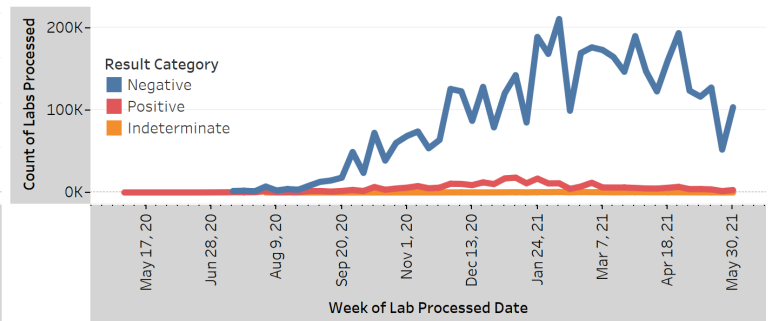
(Note: All data is provisional as of 6/3/21)



### Count of SARS-CoV-2 PCR Labs Processed via PHID by Week of Lab Processed Date



### Count of SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Labs Processed via PHID by Week of Lab Processed Date



## Comma Separated Value (CSV) File Submitter Resource Links

- PHID Lab Submitter Resource Page**- For facilities who submit electronic laboratory reports (ELRs) via the approved Comma Separated Value (CSV) file format, this page provides links to resources including the CSV template, data dictionary, and reporting guidelines. Frequently asked questions and other useful handouts covering common errors are available. (<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/submitters.aspx>)
- PHID Video Trainings**- A series of recorded training videos are available through this link covering common errors submitted via CSV file format. Additionally, previous live webinar trainings hosted by PHID for laboratories are also available. (<https://www.gotostage.com/channel/dshsnedss-phid-trainings>)

## Error Automation

Recently, PHID implemented a new process to automate error validation emails that are sent to facilities when one or more records in the file fail validation. Prior to this change, personalized emails were sent manually including customized feedback for errored files. With an increasing number of facilities reporting COVID-19 results and increasing volume of reports, it was necessary to standardize and automate the process for correcting files.

The new emails contain a standard notification alerting a facility to records that failed processing and an attached report file listing each errored record. The attached report includes accession number(s) of each individual errored lab along with detailed information on the reason that the record failed validation. Resource links are also included. PHID created several guidance videos to help submitters walk through the process of correcting common errors. Please continue to only resubmit records that failed validation (unless the entire file failed), making sure to append the word "Corrections" to the original file name. The number in the issue column corresponds to the row number of the record in original file submitted. The record(s), in their entirety, need to be resubmitted with the corrections, not just the corrected variables.

With the change to automation, some submitters may find that minor issues that were manually corrected by PHID in the past are now being flagged for follow up. These issues may include commas in the data, patient middle name initials exceeding the permitted one-character limit, or dates being reported in the incorrect format.

## CSV Test Files

Before we approve facilities to submit actual data, we require that each facility submit a test file. This is done to ensure that facilities can connect to our servers (via SFTP) and the data being reported will be uploaded to our surveillance system without being rejected.

We ask each registered facility to submit a test file, with 2-3 lines of test data. The test data should be representative of your actual data, with only the patient information being fictitious but still valid. Many of the values in the data must be in a specific format or must be selected from a list of predetermined values. The structure of the file can't deviate from the structure of our template. Do not add, delete, or rearrange any columns. The data dictionary has been created to provide detailed instructions and guidance for each variable.

Please make sure that the test file is submitted as a CSV (MS-DOS) file and saved in the root directory ("/") of the SFTP. In addition, the file name must conform to our naming convention: The file name should start with the word "Test", and include the facility name, CLIA number, and date. We will approve the facility to submit actual data **only after the test file has passed validation without any issues.**

## Unique Accession Number

When the PHID Team contacts a facility about failed records, we reference the file name and accession number. If the test and date of collection are the same, the accession number for each record must be different, even for the same patient. However, accession numbers can be the same if different tests are ordered. For example, if a patient has a serology test results, both the IgM and IgG results can have the same accession number because the LOINC code and LOINC texts for each result will be different. In addition, if the same patient was tested on different days, the accession number may still be the same because the date of collection for each test will be different.

If, for some reason, the same patient was tested more than once on the same day, the accession number must be unique for each test performed.

If there are any questions, please contact us at [COVID-19ELR@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:COVID-19ELR@dshs.texas.gov).

## PHID Contact Info

- For questions on COVID-19 lab registration, onboarding, resubmitting corrections, and technical assistance please send email to [COVID-19ELR@dshs.texas.gov](mailto: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](mailto:IDI@dshs.texas.gov) .
- To submit a question to the Texas National Electronic Disease Surveillance System help desk, please contact [NEDSS@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:NEDSS@dshs.texas.gov) .



## Thanks for checking us out!

Thank you for taking time out to review our first issue of the **PHID INSIDER!** We look forward to bringing you new issues and keeping you informed of the latest happenings in infectious disease public health informatics.



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