

08-03

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Notifiable Disease Reporting and Surveillance Systems

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports continued evaluation and modernization of nationally notifiable disease reporting and surveillance systems by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) health departments and healthcare partners. NACCHO urges federal, state, and local partners to strengthen both reporting mechanisms (e.g., electronic laboratory reporting [ELR], electronic case reporting [eCR]) and surveillance data systems to ensure timely, accurate, and actionable public health data while minimizing burden on healthcare providers and public health agencies.

NACCHO calls for the convening of a multi-sector stakeholder panel, including healthcare providers, public health practitioners, informatics experts, and federal partners to establish a strategic vision for nationally notifiable disease surveillance. This effort should ensure that the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS) and related data systems are supported by modern technology, interoperable standards, and a trained workforce. Sustained federal investment is essential to support these efforts and enable STLT health departments to implement improvements. Investments should prioritize local health department's capacity to implement and operationalize reporting and surveillance improvements, ensuring that data systems support real-time public health decision-making and community-level interventions.

NACCHO recommends that CDC, in collaboration with STLT and healthcare partners, conduct a comprehensive review and modernization of notifiable disease reporting and surveillance systems. NACCHO further urges Congress to provide sustained funding and support for implementation of these modernization efforts, particularly at the local level, including the following actions:

1. Clarify Data Purpose and Use

- a. Define the rationale for required and recommended data elements, including how data are used at local, state, and federal levels.
- b. Distinguish critical data elements necessary for public health action from optional elements, with attention to feasibility within electronic health record (EHR) systems.¹

2. Strengthen Reporting Mechanisms

- a. Assess current reporting pathways (e.g., ELR, eCR) and streamline processes to

- improve completeness and timeliness.
 - b. Identify opportunities to reduce provider burden through automation, interoperability, and standardized reporting workflows.
- 3. Modernize Surveillance Systems and Processes**
- a. Evaluate surveillance data systems and processes used by STLT health departments to support data collection, analysis, and trend monitoring.²
 - b. Define characteristics of electronic systems that enable efficient surveillance, including interoperability, data quality controls, and analytic capacity.
- 4. Enhance Data Systems While Minimizing Burden**
- a. Balance the collection of additional demographic and social data (e.g., housing status, insurance status) with feasibility, privacy considerations, and reporting burden.
 - b. Promote scalable approaches that allow jurisdictions to collect expanded data elements based on local capacity and public health priorities.
 - c. Support LHD access to disaggregated data (or the ability to disaggregate data). 
- 5. Address Systemic Barriers**
- a. Identify technical, legal, workforce, and resource challenges that hinder effective reporting and surveillance.
 - b. Recommend policy, funding, and workforce development strategies to address these barriers.
- 6. Improve Data Sharing and Emergency Responsiveness**
- a. Develop mechanisms within routine reporting systems that enable rapid, secure exchange of ad hoc data during public health emergencies.
 - b. Strengthen partnerships among LHDs, states, healthcare providers, and CDC to support bidirectional data sharing and coordinated response.

Justification

The National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) supports standardized tracking of health conditions across the United States to detect outbreaks, monitor trends, and inform public health action.³ Through collaboration between the CDC and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), states decide which diseases will be nationally notifiable, and voluntarily report nationally notifiable conditions using standardized case definitions, while states and territories establish their own legally reportable conditions and reporting requirements.

Local health departments (LHDs) play a critical role in disease surveillance by receiving reports, conducting case investigations, implementing control measures, and informing local public health policy and interventions. Effective surveillance requires timely access to both case-level and aggregated data to assess disease incidence, prevalence, and trends at the community level.

However, LHDs are not consistently engaged in decisions related to disease prioritization, reporting system design, or data-sharing practices. Variability in state reporting systems and workflows can limit LHD access to actionable data and create administrative burden for

healthcare providers and public health agencies. Ensuring that reporting and surveillance systems are designed to meet LHD operational needs and support bidirectional data sharing is essential for effective and equitable public health response.

Without sustained investment, reporting and surveillance systems risk becoming outdated, overly burdensome, and misaligned with public health practice, potentially undermining trust in public health and response capacity.

References

1. Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. (2026). United States Core Data for Interoperability (USCDI). Retrieved February 17, 2026, from <https://www.healthit.gov/isa/united-states-core-data-interoperability-uscdi>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025). Data Modernization Initiative Strategic Plan. Retrieved February 17, 2026, from <https://www.cdc.gov/public-health-data-strategy/php/about/index.html>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2026). National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS). Retrieved February 17, 2026, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nndss>

Record of Action

Proposed by NACCHO Infectious Disease Prevention & Control Workgroup

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