 Syndromic Surveillance Governance Council  
February 22, 2018  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
DSHS, 1100 West 49th Street, M-100  
Austin, TX 78756

Attendees (* Council Members):
* Herminia Alva, MPH, CPH, Disaster Epidemiologist, Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
* Carol M. Davis, MSPH, CPH, Deputy Regional Director, Public Health Region (PHR) 7, DSHS
* Linda K. Gaul, MPH, PhD, State Epidemiologist, DSHS
* David W. Gruber, Associate Commissioner, Division for Regional and Local Health Operations (RLHO), DSHS
* Talmage Holmes, PhD, MPH, Associate Director, Disease Control and Prevention, Tarrant County Public Health
* Philip Huang, MD, MPH, Medical Director/Health Authority, Austin Public Health
* Johnathan Ledbetter, MPH, Epidemiologist/Invasive and Respiratory Infectious Disease Team Lead, Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Branch, DSHS
* Belinda Medrano, MPH, Infection Prevention, Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville
* Thaddeus Miller, MPH, DrPH, Associate Professor, University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC), School of Public Health
* Santos Navarrette, Jr., MA, MBA, Assistant Health Administrator, Abilene-Taylor County Public Health District
* Joann Schulte, DO, MPH, Chief Physician and Deputy Health Authority, Houston Health Department

Leo Achembong, Health IT Policy Project Manager, DSHS  
Christine Ajufo, Syndromic Surveillance Intern, RLHO, DSHS  
Carrie Bradford, PhD, Syndromic Surveillance Team Lead, RLHO, DSHS  
Shannon Creekmur, HIPAA Privacy Officer, CER, DSHS  
Jyllisa Mabion, Syndromic Surveillance Epidemiologist, RLHO, DSHS  
Wes McNeely, Houston Health Department  
Chris Meredith, Information Technology, HHSC  
Bonnie Feldt Morehead, Epidemiologist, PHR 7, DSHS  
Vanessa Palacios, Epidemiologist, PHR 9/10, DSHS  
Janet Pichette, Chief Epidemiologist, Austin Public Health  
Dr. Carlos Plasencia, Regional Medical Director, PHR 6/5, DSHS  
Steven Pulvino, Epidemiologist, PHR 2/3, DSHS  
Elise Rush, Epidemiologist, PHR 8, DSHS  
Bill Stephens, Tarrant County Public Health  
Carla Gutierrez Tyler, Epidemiologist, PHR 11, DSHS  
Biru Yang, Houston Health Department  
Li Zhu, Information Technology, HHSC

Council Members Not Present:
* Ruben Sanchez, CTCM, Application Portfolio Manager, Information Technology Public Health Applications, Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)
* Carl Vartian, MD, MS, Chief Medical Information Officer, HCA-Gulf Coast Division
* Don Vickers, MED, CEO/Managing Partner, HPT Healthcare
1. **Welcome and Introductions**  
   - Welcome new members – Herminia Alva, Ruben Sanchez, Dr. Joann Schulte, Dr. Talmage Holmes, and Johnathan Ledbetter.  
   - Roll call of Council members and introductions of other attendees.

2. **Approval of November 2, 2017, Meeting Minutes**  
   - Minutes were approved by email prior to meeting.

3. **Old Business**  
   a. **TxS2 Implementation and Registration**  
      - Data provider status map shows participation numbers are increasing.  
      - Registration status table shows how many data providers we have at each step and how many facilities still need to start the process.  
      - Local Health Department map and table shows how many users we have statewide.  
      - Of the 74 former TALHO data providers, there are 4 remaining to engage.  
      - DSHS is the keeper of the system but not the owners of the data. We want to ensure information exchange and use.  
      - DSHS is requesting partners share syndromic surveillance use cases and success stories.  
      - DSHS status update:  
        - Continued message testing and there are 73 facilities in production.  
        - Continued distribution of user credentials to hospital and local health department staff.  
        - Continued recruiting and MOU processing.  
        - Onboarded 10 facilities to the National Syndromic Surveillance Program, others to be added quarterly.  
        - Onboarding Tarrant County.  
        - Will onboard Houston in late spring/early summer.  
        - Began rulemaking process – while this is not legislatively mandated, we were advised to create rules for the system. We are currently waiting for a legal opinion to determine if we need to proceed. The draft rules are redundant to what we already have in place.  
      - Tarrant County update:  
        - Onboarding with DSHS.  
        - Testing and validating installation of ESSENCE 1.20 and then will migrate legacy data into ESSENCE 1.20 for regional use.  
        - Continue to develop Community of Practice in Region 2/3 with the Regional Advisory Committee and DSHS Region 2/3 office. Next meeting scheduled in March. Developing a common user base for Region 2/3 users, including standardizing queries and query structure to share between users. Working with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the International Society for Disease Surveillance to develop use cases.  
      - Houston Update:  
        - Still in the process of copying Tarrant County’s version of ESSENCE.  
        - Planning to go live later this year.  
        - There are 39 hospitals in production and 13 engaged or in the testing/validation stage.  
        - Recently had a 6/5S consortium meeting.
Had a surplus of Hepatitis A vaccine and are using it to vaccinate the Houston homeless population.

b. Former TALHO system
   - Plan to be off the former TALHO system by summer 2018.
   - We have developed a transition plan by Public Health Region.
   - Plan to copy all data from the former TALHO system into Txs2.

c. Meaningful Use
   - No update.

4. New Business
   a. Query and Data Analysis Sharing and Standardization
      - Enhance the system by sharing how to use it with other members.
      - Houston Health Department presented on how they used syndromic surveillance for Hurricane Harvey response and on how they are using syndromic surveillance to monitor for Hepatitis A throughout their community.
      - Tarrant County Public Health presented on how they are using syndromic surveillance to look at Hurricane Harvey and Ebola retrospectively and how they use syndromic surveillance for seasonal surveillance for flu and heat-related illness. They are also working on opioid surveillance and other non-infectious disease applications such as injury, motor vehicle accidents, mental health, behavioral health, maternal and child health, and chronic disease.
      - Austin Public Health presented on how they used syndromic surveillance during Hurricane Harvey response efforts as evacuees came to the area. They have also used syndromic surveillance for a variety of other surveillance activities including seasonal flu, suicide ideation, extreme weather (heat and cold), gunshot wounds, synthetic marijuana, and special events.
      - DSHS presented on how they used syndromic surveillance to look at respiratory illness and flu.
      - Need to consider how users can share information during events and to share queries developed at the regional or local level for others to use.
      - Use historical data to look at if and how trends change. Looking for both unexpected increases and decreases in counts.

b. Regional Advisory Committees
   - Region 1 – Not on call.
   - Region 2/3 – Meeting in March, no other updates.
   - Region 4/5 – Not on call.
   - Region 6/5S – Houston Health Department and Regional office collaborating on regional consortium.
   - Region 7 – Had a meeting with regional group and there was an ESSENCE update and demonstration for epidemiology and preparedness staff and providers. Worked with Syndromic Surveillance program on respiratory syndrome data query.
• Region 8 – Filling vacancies for regional council and planning next meeting.
• Region 9/10 – Filling vacancies for regional council and sharing information with regional partners on possible uses and training.
• Region 11 – Had a meeting with regional group and there was an ESSENCE update and demonstration.

c. Annual Report
• The Annual Report is an internally required document that is currently going through leadership review.
• The Annual Report is a factual narrative of what has been done and where we are going.
• The report is due in March.

d. Topics for Discussion for April SSGC Meeting
• April meeting will be held by conference call.
• Discussion is shifting from administration to topical discussions on uses of syndromic surveillance.

5. Open Discussion
• Tarrant County – Next Community of Practice will be at Abilene-Taylor County on March 13. This will be an all-day training and development of use cases.
• TALHO transition – aiming to complete transition by summer (no exact date). Working to get others onboarded and providing data.
• Houston – Interjurisdictional etiquette workgroup formed under the Syndromic Surveillance Consortium of Southeast Texas.

6. 2018 Meeting Dates and Times

April 26, 2018, 1:00 – conference call
July 19, 2018, 1:00 – conference call
October 25, 2018, 1:00 – conference call

7. Closing