Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
An Office of the Department of Health and Human Services
Paul R. LePage, Governor Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
286 Water Street
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel.: (207) 287-8016; Fax: (207) 287-9058
TTY Users: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

Syndromic Surveillance in Maine

Early identification of a significant public health event affords faster response and intervention and leads to the prevention of disease morbidity. Syndromic surveillance is a strategy for identifying public health events at the earliest possible stage. Detectable events include emerging infectious diseases, seasonal trends (such as influenza, norovirus, ticks) disease outbreaks, and environmental exposures, either naturally occurring or as a result of human activities and acts of bioterrorism.

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (MECDC) is strengthening its surveillance capabilities by conducting syndromic surveillance using emergency department data. Hospital participation is entirely voluntary. This enhanced surveillance activity does not replace Maine's reportable disease system.

MECDC utilizes two systems, Early Aberration Reporting System (EARS) and BioSense 2.0, to analyze syndromic surveillance data. Both tools, designed by federal CDC, are used by epidemiologists to analyze and visualize public health surveillance data to assist in early identification of disease outbreaks, environmental exposures and bioterrorism events. The tools analyze data from emergency departments based on chief complaint or related field, and uses the information to determine if there is an increase in a particular syndrome. The information obtained from syndromic surveillance will help MECDC respond to emerging events. In some cases this may lead to interaction with hospital staff, especially Infection Preventionists.

The transfer of syndromic surveillance health information data from the hospital to MECDC occurs at least daily and can be multiple times during the day. The data must meet Health Level 7 (HL7) messaging requirements and travel via a predetermined secure transport mechanism. A summary of the expected data elements are as follows.

Minimum requirements:		The following data elements are requested, if available:
Facility identifier	Facility name	
Facility/visit type	Report date/time	Medical record number
Unique patient identifier	Age	Country of residence
Age units	Gender	Date of onset
Town of residence	Zip code of residence	Patient class
State of residence	County of residence	Triage notes
Race	Ethnicity	Clinical impression
Unique visiting ID	Visit date/time	Initial temperature
Chief complaint/reason for visit	Diagnosis/injury code	Initial pulse oximetry
Diagnosis type	Discharge disposition	
Disposition date and time		

Technical assistance for the transfer of this data from the hospital to MECDC is available along with detailed descriptions of each data element.

MECDC will protect and preserve the confidentiality of all data submitted by the hospital and limit access to confidential data. The information will be used for the sole purpose of disease surveillance, investigation, and control activities.

For more information please contact syndromic@maine.gov.

Updated 4/23/2013