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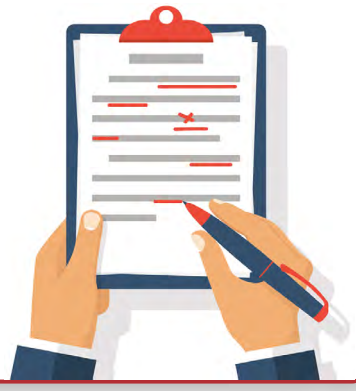
Laboratory-Epidemiology Respiratory Surveillance Program

Seasonal Planning and Coordination Checklist

This checklist should be used to plan and coordinate activities between public health laboratory and epidemiology partners throughout the respiratory virus season.

While this is focused on respiratory virus surveillance, it can be easily adapted for other surveillance programs with seasonality.

Download an editable version of this checklist to adjust it for your program or adapt it for other types of seasonal surveillance activities.



Pre-season

Public health laboratory and epidemiology staff should meet ahead of the start of the respiratory virus season to plan and coordinate activities. Consider the following activities during the discussion:

- ☐ Schedule kick-off activities, including information dissemination and a kick-off call with clinical partners (e.g., infectious diseases doctors, chief medical officers, medical directors of clinical laboratories, etc.) to understand their needs with regards to clinical and surveillance testing.
- ☐ Share the latest testing and surveillance guidance and specimen submission requirements.
- ☐ Review testing algorithms and targeted populations.
- ☐ Review and update points of contact within the public health laboratory and health department.
- ☐ Review and update submitter points of contact, as needed.
- ☐ Strategize ways to strengthen submitter recruitment and retention, including assessing whether additional courier services would be beneficial.
- ☐ Discuss roles and responsibilities regarding submitter outreach.
- ☐ Decide what metadata will be collected from submitters.
- ☐ Discuss how results will be communicated with clinical laboratory submitters and other partners.
- ☐ Confirm type and availability of supplies needed for specimen collection kits for distribution (including expiration dates for materials like transport media), as applicable.
- ☐ Review safety protocols and training on specimen collection and shipping (e.g., packaging/temperature requirements).
- ☐ Develop communication and education plans for submitters and consider offering continuing education units (CEUs) for licensure.
- ☐ Discuss plans for batching/staffing based on volume to ensure turnaround time expectations are met.

Mid-season

Laboratory and epidemiology staff should meet regularly throughout the respiratory virus season. In the middle of the season, it may be helpful to take the following actions and determine if any adjustments to the program are needed:

- ☐ Provide an internal situational awareness update and/or summary of respiratory virus activity so far, such as a review of data trends from the current season compared to national trends and/or previous seasons.
- ☐ Discuss whether national surveillance goals are being met (e.g., Influenza Right Size Goals, National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3), RSV and others, as applicable).
- ☐ Identify what can be done to increase submissions, if necessary.
- ☐ Discuss whether laboratory and epidemiology staff are receiving what is expected (e.g., timeliness of data, demographics, other metadata).
- ☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of the testing workflow, focusing on test performance and turnaround time.
- ☐ Identify whether additional supplies or resources are needed to meet national/local goals.
- ☐ Identify any concerns about new strains or reduced susceptibility to antivirals, if applicable.

End of Season

At the conclusion of the respiratory virus season, laboratory and epidemiology staff should meet to review the data trends and evaluate the respiratory virus surveillance program as a whole. Additionally, the laboratory and epidemiology staff should make preparations for maintaining surveillance in the off-season. These are some activities that should be considered during this meeting:

- ☐ Provide an internal situational awareness update and/or summary of activity for the season as a whole, including respiratory virus activity at the jurisdictional and national level.
- ☐ Evaluate whether national surveillance goals were met specifically for influenza and SARS-CoV-2; if not, discuss strategies to address the gaps ahead of the next season.
- ☐ Identify any gaps with laboratory and epidemiology staffing, including whether enough staff were in place and how well they handled the sample volume, data volumes, submitter outreach, etc.
- ☐ Review collection kit inventory and usage; determine if changes need to be made to availability and distribution for next season.
- ☐ Review performance and/or efficiency of courier service, if applicable.
- ☐ Document any changes with submitters, including whether any submitting facilities or submitter test menus have changed.
- ☐ Evaluate submitter performance and document any follow-up needed (e.g., communications, incentives, training, recruitment, etc.).
- ☐ Consider providing an end-of-season "report card" for submitters.
- ☐ Develop a plan for surveillance during the off-season.
- ☐ Review the jurisdiction's pandemic influenza plan and continuity of operations plan and consider any updates needed ahead of the next season.
- ☐ Review avian influenza response plan and determine if modifications to response plan need to be made, as applicable.

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