

Cross-cutting emerging issues: COVID-19



CONTRIBUTOR: *Johnathan Ledbetter, Manager IV, Emerging & Acute Infectious Disease Unit, Texas Department of State Health Services*

CATEGORY: **Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)**

CATEGORY: **Nationally Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System**

Texas Department of State Health Services received a large number of out-of-state COVID-19 cases and needed to devise a way to send them to other jurisdictions for which they did not have existing connections. With the help of contractors, they leveraged Epi-X technology to send COVID-19 cases to the appropriate state health department of jurisdictions.

The “What”

As COVID-19 is a nationally notifiable condition, many state health departments including the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) are reporting out-of-state (i.e., non-Texas residents) COVID-19 cases (confirmed and probable) to their “usual” state of residence that is defined by CSTE Position Statement 11-SI-04. Many health departments in the U.S., including DSHS, are using Epi-X, which is a secure web-based network that serves as a powerful information exchange to report out-of-state COVID-19 cases to the appropriate state health department or jurisdiction.



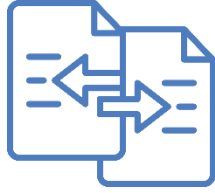
Interstate travel results in a large number of out-of state COVID-19 cases that need to be sent to other health departments. The Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit (EAIDU) of DSHS receives a large number of out-of-state COVID-19 cases (confirmed and probable) that need to be sent to other state health departments or jurisdictions. With such the large volume of out-of-state COVID-19 cases, DSHS-EAIDU needed additional staff to assist with transferring those cases to other state health departments or jurisdictions in a timely manner.

DSHS-EAIDU was able to use COVID-19 Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) cooperative agreement funds to set up contracts with staffing agencies to hire COVID-19 contractors to assist with various COVID-19 tracking or monitoring activities. This included sending out-of-state COVID-19 cases to appropriate state health departments or jurisdictions via Epi-X. As long as COVID-19 remains a nationally notifiable condition and EAIDU has the capacity and capability, the out-of-state COVID cases will continue to be sent to appropriate state health departments or jurisdictions via Epi-X.



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From August 1, 2022, through March 3, 2023, Texas transferred 14,150 out-of-state COVID-19 cases to the correct jurisdiction via Epi-X

The “So What”

From August 1, 2022, through March 3, 2023, with assistance from at least three COVID-19 contractors that were funded by COVID-19 ELC funds, Texas DSHS-EAIDU transferred 14,150 out-of-state (non-Texas residents) COVID-19 cases (confirmed and probable) via Epi-X to the appropriate state health department or jurisdiction where the COVID-19 cases resided. In addition, 36 COVID-19 cases were sent to the CDC to be distributed to other countries, and 38 COVID-19 cases were sent to CDC to be distributed to Army Post Offices (APOs).



The “Now What”

As long as COVID-19 is a nationally notifiable condition and Texas DSHS-EAIDU has the capacity and capability to transfer out-of-state COVID-19 cases (confirmed and probable) to other state health departments or jurisdictions, Texas will continue to do so. If and when COVID-19 funding decreases or runs out and contracts to hire and

retain additional staff to assist with COVID-19 surveillance activities end, DSHS-EAIDU will need to look at, reprioritize, and possibly stop sending out-of-state COVID-19 cases to other state health departments or jurisdictions via Epi-X. This could result in less collaboration with other states and slower follow-up for disease prevention activities.

Key contributors to this project include EAIDU COVID-19 Epidemiology Team and Martha Thompson, Operations Team Leader, Disease Surveillance and Epidemiology Section- Texas Department of State Health Services.