

Tennessee builds data infrastructure for one, to the benefit of many



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CATEGORY: **Interoperable Data Systems**

Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) developed infrastructure to link multiple data sources and provide timely, complete data to battle the opioid overdose epidemic.

The “What”

The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) has several rich data sources at their disposal and recognized the need to mine these data to support opioid overdose surveillance activities. TDH created infrastructure that allowed the disparate data sources to be integrated in a central location. Within this data system, linkages were created for patients across datasets to help tell a more complete story about that patient than any data set could on its own. This allowed staff to maximize and leverage existing data and, importantly, alleviated some of the reporting burden for clinical partners.



The “So What”

The infrastructure built was originally created based on the overdose use case. However, the scope of this work expanded to support other surveillance activities with immediate needs. Work is ongoing to integrate new data sources such as hospital discharge, birth, and vital records data with the goal of supporting the maternal and child health-related programs. Other programs with data needs that previously lacked the resources to create the required infrastructure can now access the information for their surveillance purposes.

The “Now What”

The scope of this project can continue to expand to support additional programs at TDH. This will allow the timely collection of more complete patient data across the department and promote public health response activities, all while reducing the reporting burden on the healthcare system. While this innovative technology is exciting, public health often experiences influxes of funds during times of crises that inevitably go away, making sustainability a concern. Maintaining this technology will require consistent funds and continued enhancement will require increased funds.



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