

Electronic faxing (eFaxing) in Texas



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

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During COVID-19, Texas Department of State Health Services (TxDSHS) saw an increase in laboratory reporters that could only fax. TxDSHS implemented eFaxing to convert faxes to an electronic form for consumption into their disease surveillance system.

The “What”

The Texas Department of State Health Services (TxDSHS) was able to provide laboratory testing facilities with the option to provide data in an electronic format through Electronic Faxing (eFaxing).

The “So What”

With the advent of COVID-19, thousands of laboratory testing facilities emerged and began testing for COVID-19 infections. Many of the new testing facilities were not sophisticated and lacked the technical expertise to provide data to TxDSHS in an electronic form. The best that many of these testing facilities could provide were faxes of the lab results. This required substantial staffing and manual entry at TxDSHS.



With the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) partnership and necessary funding, TxDSHS was able to implement an eFaxing solution whereby faxes are received and converted into a digitized Health Level Seven (HL7) format that can be readily consumed by the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS). After setup and testing, the process is automated, and no further manual intervention is required.

The “Now What”

After going live with the solution, TxDSHS is now processing over 1,000 faxes per month through this solution from eleven (11) laboratories. They have been able to cut the fax processing resource load in half and are bringing on more facilities each month. In addition to reducing the manpower needed to process faxed-in lab results, the accuracy level has improved by fifty percent (50%) as error-prone manual entry is eliminated.

The eFaxing solution provides greater interoperability and allows TxDSHS to receive critical lab results from small/low-tech providers that would never be able to deliver electronic data feeds. This provides tremendous capability and allows TxDSHS to receive lab data from laboratories across the technical spectrum, from high-tech to low-tech, and now, even to no-tech.

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