

Illinois Influenza Sentinel Surveillance Program

What is the sentinel influenza surveillance program?

IDPH coordinates an influenza surveillance program in Illinois and collaborates with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the national surveillance program. This surveillance system is dependent on data and clinical specimens submitted from sentinel sites. This program relies on provider reports and laboratory submissions for an accurate evaluation of influenza in the U.S.

What is an influenza sentinel provider and who can become one?

An ILINet provider conducts surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) in collaboration with the IDPH, the local health departments (LHDs), and the CDC, and then provides the data through a CDC website so they can be analyzed. Providers in any outpatient setting can participate (e.g., family practice, pediatricians, emergency room physicians, university health centers, urgent care centers, public health clinics).

What information do sentinel providers collect and how is it reported?

Sentinel providers report the total number of patient visits each week and the total number of patient visit for influenza-like illness by age group (0-4 years, 5-24 years, 25-49 years, 50-64 years, and >64 years). These data are entered into the CDC ILINet website by the facility once a week (by the end of the day every Tuesday). IDPH and CDC analyze and interpret these data and use them to evaluate the current season trends.

What is the virologic sentinel surveillance program?

The virologic sentinel surveillance program is another part of the overall influenza surveillance program in Illinois and is a laboratory surveillance system involving a number of selected submission sites. This program consists of testing clinical specimens from ILI patients provided by sentinel sites at designated IDPH laboratories. A CDC FDA-cleared Influenza RT-PCR assay is used as well as culturing and subtyping. Virologic surveillance is a vital part of the influenza surveillance system as it allows the CDC, IDPH, local health departments, and the sentinel sites to:

- Identify types of influenza circulating in Illinois.
- Aid in the development of next season's vaccine.
- Identify rare/novel Influenza A (H3N2v; H7) and B strains that may not be identified by commercial molecular assays; and
- Identify and submit specimens to CDC for antiviral susceptibility testing and identification of shifts in the virus's genetic makeup.

How many specimens would IDPH need submitted from each site?

We ask sentinel sites who sign up for participation in this program to send at least ten specimens each week to their designated IDPH laboratory for viral testing. Prior approval or notice is not needed for specimen submission if the site is a registered participating sentinel site.

Will the laboratory sentinel site be expected to pay for shipping or testing materials?

No. IDPH laboratory provides the testing and shipping materials, including prepaid shipping labels, to each site that participates. This program is no cost to the sentinel site volunteering to participate.

How does a provider or laboratory sign up to participate?

If you are interested in signing up or if you have additional questions, please call one of the numbers below. You may also fax or email the sign up form to us. (Fax: 217-524-0962 Email: dph.influenza@illinois.gov)

- IDPH Communicable Disease Control Section, Influenza Program Phone: 217-782-2016
- Chicago IDPH Laboratory: 312-793-4760
- Springfield IDPH Laboratory: 217-782-6562
- Carbondale IDPH Laboratory: 618-457-5131

If you are a medical provider in the city of Chicago interested in participating, please call the Chicago Department of Public Health's Influenza Coordinator at 312-746-5911.