

Disease Surveillance Fact Sheet

1. **How are cases of disease reported?** – In the United States, requirements for reporting diseases are mandated by state or local laws or regulations, and the list of reportable diseases in each state differs. In most states, cases are reported by licensed health care providers, diagnostic laboratories, or hospitals. States then share their provisional data with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which compiles and publishes the information for the nation in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). CDC publishes finalized data only after all states and territories have certified their annual reports. Finalized data for a given year are generally not available until the fall of the following year.
2. **What is a surveillance case definition?** - Reporting criteria for all nationally notifiable diseases is based on standard surveillance case definitions developed by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and CDC. The State Epidemiologists from each state each have a single vote during deliberations. Once a consensus case definition is agreed to then that recommendation is forwarded to CDC.
3. **Why is a single case definition so important?** - The usefulness of public health surveillance data depends on its uniformity, simplicity, and timeliness. Surveillance case definitions establish uniform criteria for disease reporting and should not be used as the sole criteria for establishing clinical diagnoses, determining the standard of care necessary for a particular patient, setting guidelines for quality assurance, or providing standards for reimbursement.
4. **Things to remember about disease surveillance?**
 - a. Disease surveillance is the collection of data for *public health action*,
 - b. There are many possible approaches with different attributes, and
 - c. System design must be based on objectives.
5. **What are the objectives of disease surveillance?**
 - a. To define the demographic, temporal, and geographic distribution of disease,
 - b. To test hypotheses regarding causation or transmission,
 - c. To detect outbreaks or new strains,
 - d. To guide or evaluate disease control strategies,
 - e. To assess cost of a condition,
 - f. To detect changes in public health practice,

- g. To facilitate planning and identify research needs, and/or
- h. To define the natural history of disease.

6. **For more information about Disease Surveillance:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/DataStatistics/>