

NSSP UPDATE



January 2017

Welcome to NSSP Update

NSSP Update is published monthly by the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP) and brings you the latest news about the BioSense Platform and Community of Practice.

If a colleague forwarded this issue to you, we encourage you to [subscribe](#) to receive future issues.

Message from the NSSP Program Manager

What a joy to see everyone in Atlanta last month for the International Society for Disease Surveillance (ISDS) conference. I'm truly amazed at the progress we've made—as a *community*—in setting up the new BioSense Platform. We've worked through many details about data flow and processing rules, the Access and Management Center application, ESSENCE settings, and National Picture. How exciting to have a functional system that, although not yet perfect, represents what members of our community have been requesting.

The BioSense Platform went live in August. Sites completed their transition from legacy BioSense 2.0 to the new BioSense Platform in November. And already, people are calling us to describe how they are using the system and sharing ideas. In some cases, they're even sharing data! In 2017, we'll focus on optimizing the Platform, adding new data sources like the Department of Defense, and highlighting your good work.

We recognize there's still work ahead, so please continue to tell us when something does not function well or could be improved. Also, don't be reluctant to tell us about your successes and innovations. That's what this community is about—informing, working with, and inspiring others.

Thanks for a great 2016! I'm truly blessed to begin 2017 with the NSSP team and all of you who are part of the syndromic surveillance community.

Happy New Year, everyone!

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A graphic with the text "FEEDBACK WANTED" in large, bold, blue letters. Below the text is a photograph of a man in a blue shirt pointing his finger upwards.

The BioSense Platform is designed by users, for users.
Whenever you have an idea to improve the Platform's utility, please contact us. Email your suggestions to the [NSSP Support Desk](#), and select User Feedback.

Annual NSSP Grantee Meeting, 2017 *Working Together in the New World: NSSP Revised BioSense Platform*



On February 6–8, 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Division of Health Informatics and Surveillance will host its second annual [National Syndromic Surveillance Program Grantee Meeting](#) in Atlanta, Georgia. Topics will include Meaningful Use, NSSP Community of Practice, performance measures, and data quality. The meeting will kick off with ESSENCE training on February 6. This year, in response to feedback received after the first grantee meeting, we will hold two training sessions. One will be for people new to ESSENCE, and another will target the needs of intermediate and advanced users.

Data Quality Reports Now Available

Data quality is essential before one can do analytics, accurately assess health concerns, or be taken seriously by public health decision makers. Data quality is especially vital in today’s new world of big data and data sharing.

Beginning this month, quality assessment (QA) reports will be posted to each site administrator’s report folder. These folders are accessible by using WinSCP, a free and open-source tool that supports secure file transfer between a local and remote computer.

These standardized forms—originally developed by the NSSP team to assess data quality during transition—can be of considerable help in checking *production* data. Certainly, site personnel know their data best and are subject experts in their respective localities. These reports, therefore, will complement but not supplant the QA work that sites already do and will help standardize QA of production data across all sites. Also, these reports will be a boon to sites that haven’t the resources to dedicate to QA tasks.

The NSSP team began releasing reports last November to 27 beta sites for review and feedback. The reports were previewed during an ISDS Meaningful Use webinar on December 2, 2016, and at the Electronic Health Record Vendor-Specific Data Quality Workgroup’s monthly meeting on December 16, 2016. The NSSP team also offered to conduct individual walkthroughs with personnel at each site to discuss the rationale for the design and to elicit feedback on the reports’ usefulness and functionality. To date, the NSSP team has conducted three walkthroughs and received input from four sites. All input is being considered for future iterations of the QA reports. In fact, the NSSP team has already incorporated some feedback into the design of the reports so that site personnel can specify the data categories they want to view (e.g., emergency only or data tied to discharge messages).

Here’s what the QA reports assess:

- **Data Completeness**—These reports show completeness of variables. We define *completeness* as the “visit’s full set of data,” not the capturing of a single record (message) or “last message only.” We consider data across all messages associated with “the visit” to determine whether data in the field are missing.
- **Data Timeliness**—These reports and graphs note timeliness of visit-level data for either 24- or 48-hour periods. We note the date/time of the first message (for a visit) that arrives on the BioSense Platform versus the date/time of the patient visit to calculate the lag time. (Note: Subsequent messages for the same visit are not included in the calculation.)

- **Data Validity**—These reports show conformance to PHIN vocabulary standards and provide information that is oftentimes of interest to data analysts (e.g., age, temperature). Data either do or do not conform, and supporting reports specify the value of conformance. Missing data elements are categorized as nonconforming. These reports provide record-level information. In addition, the reports include visit-level information by collapsing data across records and by using the same logic applied to downstream ESSENCE processing.

Roseanne English, BS, Lead, Analytic Data Management Team, is scheduled to speak at the 2nd Annual NSSP Grantee Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, about reporting data and tools. Roseanne will discuss the reports mentioned above.

Updated Data Flow Requirements Documentation (v26)

Check out the latest version of the [Data Flow Requirements](#) in the document review area of ISDS's website (sign-in required).

This document includes detailed information about data elements stored in NSSP data tables. Descriptions for some data elements were updated to add clarity. For convenience, the *ArchiveProcessed* table worksheet now includes links to the PHIN VADS website for specific data elements associated with a standard.

Updates to AMC and Quick Start Guide

The *BioSense Platform Quick Start Guide to Using the Access & Management Center (AMC)* will be updated to reflect a couple of system changes scheduled for late January 2017:

- A Manage Users tab will enable site administrators to create new accounts, view and modify user accounts, and download a report that lists site users. The report will be available in CSV format.
- With the shutdown of the BioSense 2.0 application, the BioSense and PHPMyAdmin buttons will be removed from the AMC's My Info page.

The guide will also include a description of the Save/Submit functionality added to the AMC last month.



NSSP Adds Resource Center

If you've perused the NSSP website recently, we hope you noticed the new resource center. It consolidates essential onboarding documents, quick start guides, message mapping guides, and other forms and guidance that will be needed when new facilities and staff join and participate in the NSSP. This month, we've added some tried and true resources for learning about syndromic surveillance. Check out [New to Syndromic Surveillance](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 3, 2017	Phase 4 Shutdown of Legacy BioSense 2.0 Front-end Application
January 9, 2017	On this date during the weekly conference call for onboarding support (3:00–4:00 PM EST), the team will answer questions from site administrators about how to complete and submit master facility tables (MFTs) to NSSP for first quarter planning and prioritization.
January 20, 2017	Deadline for submitting updated MFT to NSSP.
January 27, 2017	NSSP will provide onboarding schedule to site administrators for review.
February 6, 2017	Quarter 1 onboarding begins.
February 6–8, 2017	Annual NSSP Grantee Meeting, 2017; Working Together in the New World: NSSP Revised BioSense Platform ; Atlanta, Georgia.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UPDATES

- Mini update to the Access & Management Center (AMC) on December 16, 2016. Update allows site administrators to generate and export a basic report of user status and last login date and to edit an AMC Data Access Rule and easily add new users.
- Mondays Onboarding Support Calls: 3:00–4:00 PM EST
- Wednesdays Data Validation Support Calls: 3:00–4:00 PM EST
- 2nd Thursday Scheduled vendor patches in staging environment: 6:00–10:00 AM EST
- 3rd Thursday Scheduled vendor patches in production environment: 6:00–10:00 AM EST

ONBOARDING UPDATES

First Quarter MFT Planning

We are planning NSSP onboarding activities for the first quarter of 2017. Beginning the first week in January, site administrators will be given a copy of their Master Facility Table (MFT) and asked to update it with information about facilities they want to bring onboard the BioSense Platform in February, March, and April 2017.

The deadline to submit updated MFTs is **January 20, 2017**.

Facilities that have not been added by the January 20 deadline will be added on a best-effort basis. Site administrators and onboarding coordinators with questions about how to complete and submit the MFT are encouraged to attend the January 9, 2017, onboarding conference call.



Onboarding Support

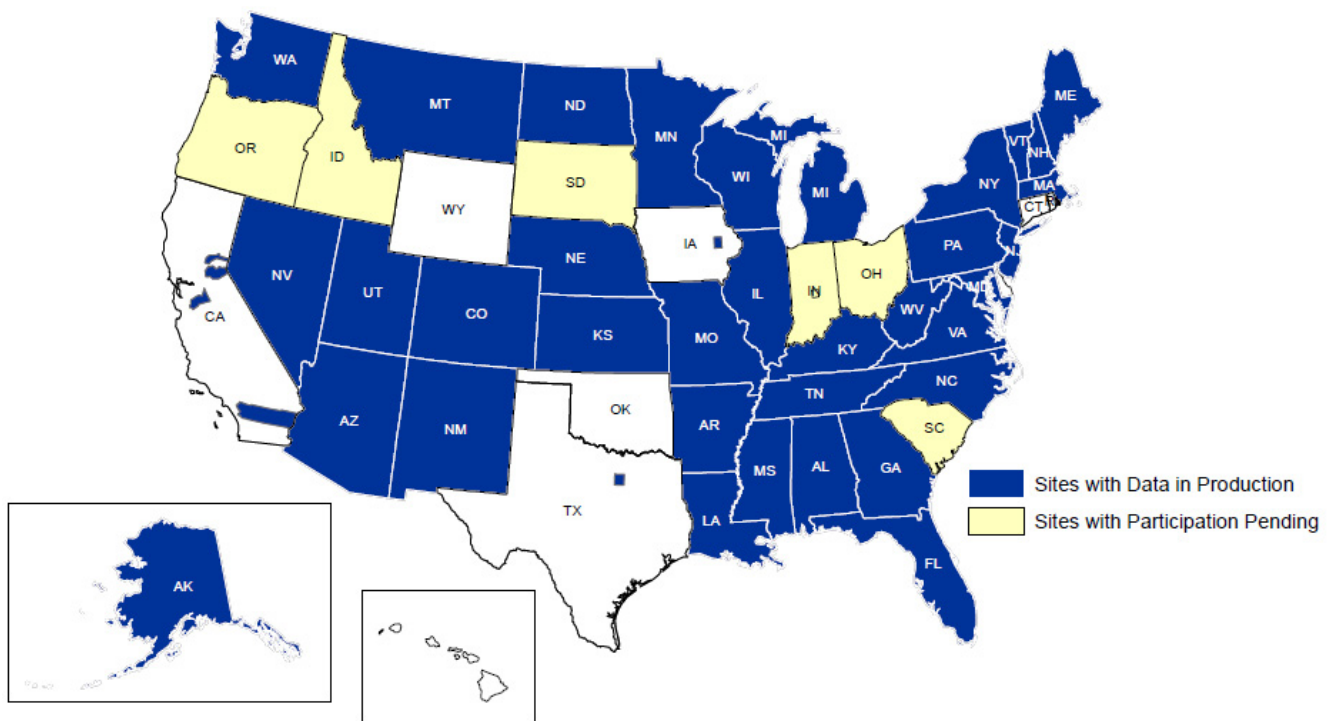
Conference calls are held by invitation every Monday, 3:00–4:00 PM EST, to discuss the process and to answer questions in a group forum. The January 9, 2017, onboarding support call will be open to all site administrators and onboarding coordinators who have questions about the planning and prioritization process for onboarding facilities to the BioSense Platform.

Data Validation Support

Conference calls are held every Wednesday, 3:00–4:00 PM EST, to assist with data validation compliance. For more information or to download the template for validating data, contact the [service desk](#).

NSSP PARTICIPATION

NSSP participation has increased to 44 sites* in 40 states. Some sites have successfully integrated syndromic surveillance into their daily work flow and are proficient at identifying and understanding data anomalies. Other sites are new to syndromic surveillance or to ESSENCE. Please keep this in mind when you look at the map below. Although we're pleased with the NSSP participation to date, sites with data in production do not always translate into sites with strong data representativeness or broad coverage. The NSSP team is working closely with sites to improve data representativeness.



*The NSSP model groups facilities (i.e., hospital emergency departments, outpatient clinics) that provide data under a single data administrative authority, called a site administrator. These facilities and single-site administrator constitute a *site*.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE UPDATES

A Community of Practice (CoP) panel was held during the ISDS Annual Conference in Atlanta on December 7, 2016, and included presentations from Mike Coletta (National Syndromic Surveillance Program Manager, CDC), Rosa Ergas (NSSP CoP Steering Committee Chair), and Emilie Lamb (Director of Informatics, ISDS). ISDS announced the release of its new website that will provide users a more robust environment to find resources and potential partners working in health surveillance. Attendees had an opportunity to suggest content they'd like to see shared on the site and to discuss ways to invigorate the community and enliven local, state, and national support for syndromic surveillance. The design and build of the website is in progress, with the release anticipated during the first quarter of 2017. Additionally, an open CoP Steering Committee meeting was held during the conference to discuss the restructuring of committees and workgroups to better serve the surveillance community.



Further, ISDS is working with the NSSP team on a portal that will link to the new site's offerings and also provide access to the BioSense Platform. The portal will be one more way in which members of the CoP can link to excellent content, subject experts, and innovators in syndromic surveillance.

For more information, please go to <http://www.syndromic.org/cop/nssp>.

eSHARE EVENTS

- Annual NSSP Grantee Meeting, 2017; Working Together in the New World: NSSP Revised BioSense Platform; **February 6–8, 2017**, in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 2017 NACCHO Annual Conference: [Public Revolution: Bridging Clinical Medicine and Population Health](#); **July 11–13, 2017**, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.