RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STLT PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES

Mass Gathering Planning & Response

Developed by the **Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE)**, with input from the **Public Health Response & Incident Surveillance at Mass Gatherings (PRISM) Workgroup** and in collaboration with **CDC**, these recommendations help applied epidemiologists at state, Tribal, local, and territorial health agencies prepare for mass gathering events.

Planning & Operations

Epidemiologists belong in every phase of the emergency management cycle and in the ICS structure for event preparedness and response.

- **Train and exercise.** Ensure epidemiologists are trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
- **Build epidemiologists into ICS.** Include one or more units focused on public health surveillance and epidemiologic investigation.
- **Develop response rosters.** Maintain rosters of surveillance staff and epidemiologists for surge staffing and deployment.

Disease & Conditions of Interest

Prioritizing event-specific conditions strengthens readiness and shapes response, alongside routine monitoring of reportable diseases.

- **Join the jurisdictional risk assessment.** Ensure it captures mass-gathering disease and conditions of interest.
- **Review the literature.** Consider existing research and prior event findings on mass-gathering surveillance and threats.
- **Identify conditions of interest.** Determine which diseases and conditions to monitor during planning and response.

Data Sources & Systems

Enhanced surveillance may call for additional case-based or event-based data sources beyond routine reporting.

- **Evaluate systems for gaps.** Identify opportunities to enhance surveillance through new data streams, variables, or dashboards.
- **Incorporate historical data.** Use at least five years of historical data from external sources when possible.
- **Know each system's cadence.** Understand the timeliness and completeness of every system informing situational awareness.
- **Set the monitoring window.** Determine how long enhanced monitoring should run before and after the event.

Travelers' Health

Population surges and increased travel can shift disease transmission and healthcare utilization in unexpected ways.

- **Track regional & global activity.** Maintain awareness of disease threats outside your jurisdiction before, during, and after the event.
- **Apply residence guidelines.** Follow CSTE's **Revised Guidelines for Determining Residence for Disease Notification Purposes**.
- **Confirm communication protocols.** Review internal and external information-sharing efforts.
- **Leverage existing capabilities.** Identify jurisdictional surveillance tools to supplement traveler-focused monitoring.
- **Review traveler reporting.** Update protocols for post-arrival disease reporting and investigation.

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Syndromic Surveillance

Syndromic surveillance (SyS) delivers near real-time signals before lab confirmation, supporting early warning and cross-jurisdictional coordination.

- **Develop a pre-event strategy.** Build mass-gathering–specific SyS plans well in advance of the event.
- **Establish a baseline.** Review historical SyS data from comparable timeframes or prior large-scale events.
- **Add event-specific workflows.** Create queries and routines for daily or more frequent review during the event.
- **Define escalation pathways.** Formalize how signals reach epidemiology leads, EOC staff, and partner agencies.
- **Verify facility data.** Assess timeliness and completeness from facilities near match venues beforehand.

Wastewater Surveillance

A fast, scalable, privacy-protecting way to track community-level infection trends—independent of care-seeking or symptoms.

- **Coordinate with facilities.** Identify sewersheds serving the areas where visitors will arrive during the event.
- **Select pathogens to monitor.** Work with lab and epidemiology experts to choose targets and a monitoring and response plan.
- **Establish a baseline.** Review historical data for monitored sewersheds from comparable periods or events.
- **Build a response framework.** Define how wastewater signals reach epidemiology leads, EOC staff, and partners to drive action.

Worker Safety & Health

The scale and density of mass gatherings strain resources and amplify occupational hazards; surveillance helps spot trends and guide prevention.

- **Assess risks before the event.** Identify hazards across roles—medical volunteers, security, catering, and cleanup crews.
- **Conduct occupational surveillance.** Monitor work-related injury and illness trends by job type or activity.
- **Apply the hierarchy of controls.** Use the NIOSH Hierarchy of Controls to prioritize actions against hazardous exposures.

Putting these recommendations to work

These focus areas are designed to be adopted together as part of jurisdictional mass-gathering planning. Begin early: integrate epidemiologists into ICS, prioritize conditions of interest, and stand up the data, syndromic, and wastewater systems needed to maintain situational awareness before, during, and after the event.