

Background Information on Information Systems

Just as doctors gather information about a patient in order to diagnose and treat an ailment, public health practitioners do the same for populations.

Public health professionals collect and use data, information, and communications systems to investigate and diagnose disease outbreaks (ie. flu, SARS, West Nile virus) and to monitor the prevalence of chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer, and stroke. The information collected is used to inform the public, conduct research, and develop policies.

Strengthening Information Systems Depends Upon Our Ability to...

- Effectively communicate health information and messages to the public and media
- Develop and maintain a national health tracking network
- Have the ability to share data across agencies and organizations (uniform standards for collecting, storing, and transmitting data)
- Gather and use health and demographic statistics
- Increase, or make better use of, funding for the development of comprehensive data systems and communications capacity

To learn more about what is currently being done to strengthen public health surveillance and information systems, visit the “Information Systems” section on the Public Health Infrastructure Resource Center website.

Visit <http://www.phf.org/infrastructure>



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