

# SURVEILLANCE INFORMATION FLOW

## INTRODUCTION

This section describes the general procedures for surveillance and information management. Specific procedures for each notifiable disease and condition, by disease groupings, are outlined in disease specific guidelines.

Information coming into the public health surveillance system related to notifiable diseases and conditions may come from several sources and from different levels and may vary in the urgency of reporting. Sources, urgency and data flow will be outlined in this section.

## SOURCES OF NOTIFIABLE DISEASE/CONDITION REPORTS FOR THE DHA

### Information Reported Directly to the DHA

There are several different groups of individuals who are required to report cases of notifiable diseases and conditions to the district MOH per the [It's the Law poster](#). The suspicion that a person may have a notifiable disease or condition may arise through clinical examination of the individual, through results of laboratory testing of relevant clinical specimens, or on autopsy.

Individuals required to report notifiable diseases and conditions to the MOH include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ***Clinicians (e.g. physicians, registered nurses)***

Clinicians must report cases of notifiable diseases and conditions to the MOH.

- ***Laboratories***

The laboratory protocol deals with the reporting of notifiable diseases, under authority of the [Health Protection Act](#), by all hospital laboratories in Nova Scotia. The protocol is as follows:

The laboratory will report cases of notifiable disease. Presumptive cases may be reported if there is a suspected outbreak or other unusual circumstances:

- For urgent cases (i.e. those in the red box on the [It's the Law poster](#)) the laboratory will telephone the report to Public Health Services in the DHA in which the ordering physician practices. After hours, the laboratory will telephone the report to the Medical Officer of Health on call
- For urgent and non-urgent cases a copy of the final lab report will be sent to Public Health Services by the usual means

Note: If the laboratory is unable to distinguish from which DHA a specimen originated or where the physician practices, then the report will go to Public Health Services in the district where the laboratory is located for appropriate follow-up and referral.

Regional public health laboratories do not complete all types of diagnostic testing offered within the province. In instances where testing is not offered at the regional level or if further testing is required, specimens are referred to the anchor laboratory of the Provincial Public Health Laboratory Network (PPHLN) for testing. Results are then

reported to the regional laboratory, who in turn report the results to the ordering physician and Public Health Services in the DHA where the physician practices.

Laboratory reports for notifiable conditions may also be reported from outside of Nova Scotia, either from public health in another jurisdiction or from the PHAC National Microbiology Laboratory. These results are forwarded by DHW to Public Health Services in the DHA where the case resides.

Reporting of cases of notifiable diseases from the PPHLN anchor laboratory at the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre (QEII) is done by fax and through the Electronic Lab Reporting system (ELR). Reports are delivered from the QEII lab's information system to the ELR interface nightly. Public health staff in the DHAs should ensure that ELR is checked daily for laboratory reports originating from the PPHLN Microbiology Laboratory.

- ***School, Long-Term Care, and Other Institutional Administrators***

The appropriate personnel, including school principals, childcare centre operators, hospital/long-term care facility staff, and private school operators, must report cases of notifiable diseases and conditions to the appropriate Public Health Services office by telephone.

- ***Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture***

Food Safety Specialists in these two provincial departments may receive information regarding communicable diseases, particularly outbreaks of enteric illness, as it relates to their role in food safety and drinking water quality. They must report this information to the MOH in the appropriate DHA.

### **Information Reported Directly to DHW**

Information from other provincial and federal sources arriving at DHW is forwarded to the appropriate DHA for follow-up. This information may come from several sources, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Other Jurisdictions (i.e. another province, territory or PHAC)
- Other federal sources (i.e. Quarantine Services or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency)
- Vital Statistics
- Canadian Blood Services
- Insurance Companies