

CASE STUDY



LexisNexis Accurant for Government: Helping Public Health Agencies to Prevent and Control the Spread of Infectious Disease

DECEMBER 2017

The prevention and control of infectious diseases has deep roots in our nation's history as a key public health priority. Going back to 1901, all states have laws mandating clinicians to notify local public health agencies of certain infectious diseases. Today, while the organization of public health agencies and the laws governing them differ among the states, the general requirement for reporting infectious diseases is similar. When a clinician diagnoses a patient with a certain infectious disease, he/she is required by their state law within a mandated period of time – typically 24 hours or seven days, depending upon the disease – to notify public health authorities that the patient has the disease so the agency may take the appropriate steps with the patient. Those notifications are made to the Epidemiology/Infectious Disease Departments.

What Happens When an Infectious Disease Case is Reported

Whether operating at the state, county or local level, the Epidemiology/Infectious Disease Department is the organization tasked with the mission to provide infectious disease investigation, management, education and prevention services to its jurisdiction. And, once notified by a clinician that a patient has been diagnosed with an infectious disease, these Departments are mandated by state law and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to follow up with the diagnosed patient to make sure they receive the treatment needed and to stop or control the spread of the disease. This is no small task.

Patient databases can be riddled with inaccuracies and hard to keep updated. In fact, we estimate that 45 million people move annually, 40 percent never notify the U.S. Postal Service of their move and even less would proactively notify the Public Health Agencies. Similarly, there are three million changes in marital status and 50,000 applications for name changes each year. People are not always easy to find. That's where LexisNexis® Accurint® for Government comes in. Accurint for Government is an online investigative research tool providing valuable contact and locate insight to government agencies.


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Case in Point: Cobb & Douglas Public Health

Consider the case of Georgia public health district, Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH). CDPH is one of 18 public health districts in Georgia and the direct point of contact for local disease control for a population of approximately 900,000 Georgians. It keeps the community safe from all types of outbreaks and infections daily, tracking the source, preventing or reducing the spread and providing medical referrals.

When notified of a case of an infectious disease, CDPH takes action by making every effort to contact the affected patient within the time period mandated by the diagnosed disease using the contact information provided by the physician or laboratory that made the notification. Sometimes, the patient's contact information is unavailable or inaccurate. Before CDPH started using Accurint for Government, its staff would reach out to the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) when they didn't have the correct contact information and ask DPH to run a search on the patient's name through their Accurint for Government account. While Georgia DPH made every effort to meet the request, it often took a few days for them to provide the patient's contact information to CDPH.

Delays are the enemy of epidemiologists. Every delay provides ample time for diseases to spread and incubate. For example, Pertussis – also known as whooping cough – has an incubation period of 21 days. It requires immediate action. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) differ in their infection rates. They can be infectious from months to years, often going undiagnosed.



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CDPH wanted to accelerate its efforts to contact affected patients by accessing the contact information themselves, so they began using Accurint for Government in March 2017.

Rachel Franklin, Director of Epidemiology with CDPH, noted: “We are trying to protect the community that we ourselves live in to make it safer for everybody. We need to use the tools to be smarter and more efficient. We are a seven-person team in this department covering a 900,000-person public health district. Whatever we can do to be smarter at following up and focusing our efforts makes everything better.”

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Marie Paul-David, District STD/HIV Prevention Manager, noted:

“Our purpose is to prevent a spread of disease – to protect you, your loved ones and your community, and Accurint is helping us to do that.”

Conclusion

Epidemiology/Infectious Disease Departments may be the unsung heroes of Public Health. They work in the background and no one knows they exist until there is an outbreak of infectious disease. Accurint for Government is being used by Epidemiology/Infectious Disease Departments across the U.S. to help their staff to find patients quickly in order to contain their spread and avoid outbreaks altogether.

Contact us to learn how your Health and Human Services Department can use Accurint for Government:

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