



BOLSTER TEXAS' PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Texas' public health infrastructure has been severely tested during the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislature can fix cracks in the system that hampered containment of COVID-19.

THE PROBLEMS:	THE SOLUTIONS:
Quarantine orders from local health officials must be delivered in-person or by mail, delaying notifications and requiring unnecessary in-person outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Extend local health authorities' ability to deliver quarantine orders electronically.
Texas law states "properties" must be infected before local health authorities can close them. COVID-19 infects people, not properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clarify local health officials' authority to prevent superspreading by temporarily closing properties during uncontrolled person-to-person disease transmission.
Case reporting from labs to state and local health departments has not always been timely, consistent, or complete.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enforce requirements for laboratories to report case results promptly and consistently. ✓ Extend the same reporting expectations to other sites performing large-scale testing.
Outdated data systems were strained under high volume of case reports, resulting in backlogs, coding errors, and slowing the state's response. Data systems weren't interoperable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adopt modern, interoperable data transfer systems that work with existing data collection tools.
Emergency stockpiles of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies contained unusable items, quickly ran out, and were not distributed equitably.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Maintain a Texas stockpile to respond quickly to health threats with enough of the right products when a disaster or disease strikes.
Not all local health departments have staff or capability to analyze disease surveillance data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hire more trained epidemiologists and other public health specialists/nurses. ✓ Sustain this workforce at all times. ✓ Reimburse expenses to deploy trained staff from one area to another during a localized surge event.
Incomplete and inconsistent demographic information on cases limited analysis of which Texans COVID-19 affected most.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Require laboratories to include race, ethnicity, gender, and other key demographic information in their reporting data. ✓ Ensure plans for future pandemic disaster response incorporate needs of diverse populations.



WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE?

- Agencies available to respond to the needs of the population;
- Up-to-date data systems and technologies that provide critical information; and
- A capable and competent workforce that delivers the essential public health services every day to the population.

Source: [Healthy People 2020](#)

THE TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION RECOMMENDS:

Conduct an external study to examine use of public health data, reporting, and access during the COVID-19 emergency. Require participation by entities that use and report public health data. Examine opportunities to improve usefulness of public health data for detecting and addressing health disparities.



The Texas Public Health Coalition is a coalition of health professional organizations and health-focused organizations dedicated to disease prevention and health promotion.

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MEMBERS

Alzheimer's Association	Texas Association of Community Health Centers
American Heart Association	Texas Dental Association
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas	Texas eHealth Alliance
Children's Hospital Association of Texas	Texas Health Institute
The Cooper Institute	Texas Hospital Association
Harris County Public Health	Texas Medical Association
The Immunization Partnership	Texas Nurses Association
March of Dimes	Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc.
Methodist Healthcare Ministries	Texas Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Academy of Family Physicians	Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics	Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility
Texas Academy of Physician Assistants	Texas Public Health Association
Texas Association of City & County Health Officials	Texas Renal Coalition
	Texas School Nurses Organization
	Texas State Alliance of YMCAs
	United Ways of Texas

RESOURCES

CANCER PREVENTION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TEXAS
MD ANDERSON CANCER CENTER

MICHAEL AND SUSAN DELL CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING
PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES