National Wastewater Surveillance System
Implementation for COVID-19 and Beyond

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Standards to Support an Enduring Capability in Wastewater Surveillance for Public Health Workshop
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cdc.gov/coronavirus
Wastewater Surveillance | Public Health Toolbox

- Captures sub-clinical infections
- Independent of healthcare-seeking behavior and testing access
- Wastewater serves as an efficient pooled sample of community infection levels
- Data available within days of viral shedding onset versus up to 2-week lag for other surveillance data
SARS-CoV-2 Wastewater Surveillance Evaluation

Reported wastewater data associated with reported cases ~6 days in the future.
National Disease Surveillance | CDC’s Role

- Ensure data comparability across jurisdictions
- Analyze data to provide public health interpretation and guidance
- Summarize and make national data available for states and public
- Support inter-health agency communication for public health action
NWSS is a collaboration between Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and agencies throughout the federal government.
NWSS DCIPHER Results Dashboard
Participation in NWSS is growing quickly

- Currently, 36 ELC-funded jurisdictions totaling $223M for wastewater surveillance activities
- Additional $34M pending award
NWSS Communities of Practice

Health Departments
Host: CDC
106 participants from 21 jurisdictions
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Data coordination, submission, & interpretation
- Public health action

Laboratories
Host: Association of Public Health Laboratories
37 participating labs in 27 jurisdictions
- Best Practices and Lab Startup Guides
- Corporate pricing agreements
- Workflow pilot projects

Utilities
Host: Water Environment Federation
517 registered facilities in 44 jurisdictions
- Discussion board at nwbe.org
- NWSS workshop at WEFTEC in October
- Autosampler program
Successful Use of Wastewater Data for Response

State and local jurisdictions have used wastewater data to inform response decisions:

- Independent confirmation of true increases or decreases in cases
- Distribution, siting of test capacity
- Surveillance data in communities where clinical testing is limited or not available
- Near-term forecasting of cases or hospital utilization
- Monitoring the impact of home testing
Targeted Use Cases | Potential early warning

Building-level applications:

- Long-term care facilities
- University dormitories
- Correctional facilities

Potential benefits:

- Early warning for new cases
- More efficient
- Cheaper for routine surveillance
NWSS | Facility-Level Surveillance

Long Term Care Facilities
- Internal method evaluation study initiating early 2021
- Contract with University of Kentucky to evaluate impact of plumbing design and sampling strategy at LTCFs

Universities
- ~30 universities
- Providing TA to universities
- Webinar to facilitate information sharing between universities

Prisons
- At least 4 states include prisons in their current surveillance network
- Evaluation project of on-site wastewater testing for correctional facilities through December 2021. Coordinated by Water Environment Federation
SARS-CoV-2 Variant Tracking in Wastewater

- Interpretation is limited by
  - fragmented genomes present in wastewater
  - unknown method sensitivity
  - potential variation in shedding dynamics between variants

- Wastewater sequencing may be useful for variant detection and tracking but unlikely to be useful for variant discovery

- Pursuing multiple avenues to secure wastewater sequence data for evaluation

- Working with NCBI to establish database and preliminary analysis pipeline for wastewater SARS-CoV-2 sequence data
NWSS | Challenges

- Decentralized wastewater systems will not be captured
  - ~25% of US residences are not connected to sewer
  - Onsite treatment increasingly common at correctional facilities, universities

- Appropriate interpretation of data in low incidence settings
  - Negative results do not indicate absence of cases

- Barriers to implementation and sustainability
  - Hesitance to implement a “pilot” program
  - Building testing capacity in public health labs
Flexible surveillance platform for multiple health targets

Potential additional targets
- Antibiotic resistance
- Foodborne infections
- Emerging infections
**NWSS | Beyond COVID**

Nimble structure to **rapidly adapt** to changing public health needs

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<tr>
<th>Emergency Response</th>
<th>Emerging Infections</th>
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<td>Local or regional activations in the wake of natural disasters to detect outbreaks</td>
<td>Short-term activations to assess the prevalence and distribution of emerging threats</td>
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<th>Bioterrorism</th>
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<td>Rapid activation and increased sampling frequency to detect pandemic spread into communities to target mitigation efforts</td>
<td>Rapid local or regional activation with increased sampling frequency to detect and track bioterrorism threats</td>
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For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

Contact the NWSS team at
NWSS@cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.