

# Pennsylvania Department of Health PA-NEDSS

# **New User Guide**

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# **Version History**

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# **Document Updates for Version 15.2**

Section	Notes
4.2.2	Password requirements change



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### 1. Welcome to PA-NEDSS

Welcome to PA-NEDSS, Pennsylvania's version of the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System. PA-NEDSS is a web-based application developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) to facilitate public health disease reporting, surveillance and tracking. PA-NEDSS electronically transmits disease reports from hospitals, laboratories, and physicians across the Commonwealth to the district, county and municipal health departments and the PA DOH. As disease reports are submitted, public health staff can access the reports and begin investigations.

Before using the system, a computer needs to meet the system requirements listed in the Technical Bulletin which can be accessed by clicking the <u>Technical Bulletin</u> link via the Training Materials section on the PA-NEDSS Home Page.

#### 1.1. About the New User Guide

The New User Guide offers an introduction to the system to help new users get started in PA-NEDSS. It also documents guidelines for all users. This document is not a comprehensive guide for PA-NEDSS. After logging into the PA-NEDSS application (<a href="https://www.nedss.state.pa.us">https://www.nedss.state.pa.us</a>), additional detailed training materials and user guides are available via the <a href="mailto:Training Materials">Training Materials</a> link on the Welcome to PA-NEDSS Home Page.

#### 1.2. Organization of the Guide

The New User Guide contains the following sections:

- Background on PA-NEDSS
- Business Process Changes
- Guidelines for Using PA-NEDSS
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on PA-NEDSS
- Contact Information



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# 2. Background on PA-NEDSS

#### 2.1. A Message from the Pennsylvania Department of Health

The National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS) is a national initiative driven by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to improve the timeliness, completeness, accuracy, and uniformity of surveillance data. The "NEDSS vision" includes use of the Internet for data collection and transmission, collection of data as close to the source as possible, incorporation of electronic laboratory reporting, and use of uniform coding schemes and data transmission protocols.

Local health departments and the Pennsylvania Department of Health's (PA DOH) response to this national initiative is Pennsylvania's National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (PA-NEDSS), a way to report diseases and investigative findings to the PA DOH over the Internet. It replaces the previous card and form-based methods of reporting and tracking diseases. This innovative web-based application establishes a near real-time, secure communication link between laboratories, hospitals, individual medical practices, and the PA DOH. Public health, laboratory, and clinical data can be reported efficiently and securely online. In addition to expanding the tracking and analysis of infectious disease and outbreaks, PA-NEDSS helps the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the nation increase preparedness and improve responsiveness to possible bio-terrorism attacks.

As a single, integrated web-based application, PA-NEDSS serves three additional functions:

- Improves access to complete and accurate public health data for the Commonwealth
- Consolidates the number of existing surveillance systems into a single data repository to enhance reporting and analysis
- Provides access to the PA DOH, local health departments, providers, laboratories, and hospitals near "real-time" data through a secure system.

On July 1, 2002, the system was ready for all authorized users. Users have since been able to report diseases that are part of Pennsylvania's reportable disease list via PA-NEDSS including most infectious diseases (IDE), vaccine preventable diseases (VPD), adult and childhood lead poisoning, tuberculosis (TB), and sexually transmitted diseases (STD). HIV/AIDS reporting and surveillance activities were incorporated into PA-NEDSS in December 2005. Animal bites and cancer are not reportable through PA-NEDSS at present.

## 2.2. Benefits of Using PA-NEDSS

PA-NEDSS implements standards for collecting, managing, transmitting, analyzing, and disseminating public health data. Specifically, PA-NEDSS provides users with the following:

- · Access to patient information with reduced data entry duplications
- Compliance with Pennsylvania's health regulations to help ensure public health safety to all residents and visitors to the Commonwealth.

Due to the slight differences in PA-NEDSS functionality between user groups, not all of the benefits mentioned above apply to every user group.

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# 2.3. Key Terminology

**Table 1: Key Terminology** 

Term/Concept	Definition
Accession Number	A unique number generated by a laboratory to track a patient's laboratory specimen. The laboratory should provide this number when entering disease reports. Using this number and the patient's last name, PA-NEDSS users can conduct an accession search to locate test results for a patient.
Analysis & Reporting	The PA-NEDSS Analysis & Reporting (A&R) environment contains tools for analyzing and visualizing the detailed data entered into the transactional side of PA-NEDSS by disease reporters and public health investigators. Only select users have access to Analysis & Reporting.
Contact	A person recently exposed to a contagious disease or a person suspected of being a possible source of a disease. Contact types include sex partners, needle-sharing partners, household contacts or any person that may have had close contact with a patient.
De-duplication	Allows the user to find and merge duplicate patients in PA-NEDSS. Only select users have access to the patient de-duplication functionality. Deduplication can occur across and within all program areas by designated public health staff. De-duplication is further described in the Central Office Administration Guide.
Designee	An individual who can submit disease reports on behalf of the Prime Contact of a disease reporting organization. Designees are identified by a Prime Contact and assigned unique PA-NEDSS user names and passwords.
Discarded Disease Reports	Discarded disease reports are disease reports that do not warrant additional follow-up or investigation by public health staff members. Once a report has been discarded by public health staff, it will not be displayed in the report Inboxes. Discarded reports for a patient can be viewed on the Patient Summary screen. Discarded disease reports are not purged from PA-NEDSS and may be reinstated whenever necessary.
Dynamic Questions	Allows disease reporters and public health staff members to capture information about a condition by responding to condition and observation-specific questions. These detailed questions automatically appear based on responses to preceding questions. They are used frequently to capture additional details related to risks, symptoms, tests or treatments.
Electronic Laboratory Reporting (ELR)	Electronic Laboratory Reporting (ELR) is the process by which laboratories submit batch laboratory disease reports to PA-NEDSS.
Follow-up Activity	An activity that a public health staff member performs as they investigate a disease/condition. Follow-up activities for a patient are part of a patient's investigation and may include performing a field interview, developing a treatment plan, bringing the patient in for treatment, or re-interviewing the patient. Follow-up activities can be recorded for investigations within the TB, STD, and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program Areas.



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Term/Concept	Definition
Investigation	Investigations are the case management records that public health staff uses to conduct follow-up activities and collect information relevant to disease reports that may have been submitted electronically, via paper reports, or obtained by other means. An investigation is initiated for each onset of a patient's suspected condition (i.e., a single patient may have two concurrent investigations: one for tuberculosis and one for botulism). Multiple disease reports from various sources (lab, hospital, and/or physician) and observations/test results may be linked to a single investigation.  An investigation may have reports from various sources, e.g. hospital, physician, and laboratory that refer to the same patient and suspected condition.
Investigation Merge	Allows the user to find and merge duplicate investigations which exist for a patient in PA-NEDSS. Investigation Merge is further described in the Central Office Administration Guide. Only select users have access to the investigation merge functionality.
No Follow-up Necessary	No Follow-up Necessary is the status that will be created and automatically assigned to an incoming report if the report meets a set of criteria defined by the Department of Health. The No Follow-up Necessary status can only be automatically assigned at the time of report submission and cannot be manually assigned by investigator users. Reports with the No Follow-up Necessary workflow status can be linked to an investigation, similar to an unlinked report. The submitting organization will be able to view the report from the Submitted Reports Inbox, similar to any other submitted report. The report will only be available in a read-only manner and cannot be edited.
Organization	A collection of individuals that submit disease reports via the PA-NEDSS application. A hospital and its laboratory are considered two separate organizations since they are separately licensed in Pennsylvania. Members of an organization can only view data in PA-NEDSS that is reported by themselves or by other members of the <a href="mailto:same">same</a> organization.
Prime Contact	An individual identified by an organization as being primarily responsible for that organization's disease reporting to the PA DOH via PA-NEDSS. Also, a Prime Contact is responsible for identifying and pre-registering designees who will use PA-NEDSS to enter disease reports. In a hospital, there are typically two Prime Contacts: one for the laboratory organization and one for the clinical organization.
Referral	A referral is a person or organization that provides additional information on the patient. Referral information is maintained to track who reported the patient to the health department or who the health department has suggested to further investigate the patient.
Report	Disease reports are submitted by hospitals, clinics, laboratories, physicians and investigators. A disease report contains information about the patient and details to support the identification of the suspected reportable condition.
Unlinked Reports	Unlinked reports are disease reports that are not yet linked (associated) to an investigation for further research. Unlinked reports appear in the Unlinked Reports Inbox. Public health staff members should keep the number of reports in their Unlinked Reports Inbox as small as possible by linking reports to investigations. Unlinked reports for a specific patient can be viewed on the Patient Summary screen.



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Term/Concept	Definition
Unassigned Reports	Unassigned reports are disease reports that are not assigned to a public health staff member. Unassigned reports appear in the Unassigned Reports Inbox. Public health staff members should keep the number of reports in the Unassigned Reports Inbox as small as possible.



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#### 2.4. PA-NEDSS Users

Hospitals, laboratories, providers, and public health staff who report diseases and conditions to the PA DOH are users of PA-NEDSS. Since PA-NEDSS is a web-based reporting tool, a user will need access to the Internet and authorization to register in the application.

To begin disease reporting via PA-NEDSS, hospitals, laboratories, clinics, or any organization providing treatment or testing of patients, should identify a Prime Contact. Each organization must designate one Prime Contact that is responsible for all reporting activities for that organization. Typically, an infection control practitioner is selected as the Prime Contact for a hospital, and a microbiologist or the laboratory director is selected as the Prime Contact for a laboratory. An organization such as a large laboratory may have a hierarchal structure where there are several labs that are responsible for their own testing and reporting, such as chemistry and microbiology. These organizations may each register as a separate organization with their own Prime Contact and designees when the business needs so dictate. The Prime Contact is tasked with ensuring that their organization is compliant with PA DOH reporting regulations and is responsible for providing other disease reporters within their facility access to PA-NEDSS. Individuals given access to PA-NEDSS by the Prime Contact are designees. Even if there is only one additional person from your organization entering disease reports, establish a designee. A designee serves as a backup for the Prime Contact to ensure that the organization will continue to fulfill reporting obligations if the Prime Contact is absent. If you are responsible for reporting public health diseases and you do not have PA-NEDSS access yet, contact the head of infection control or the laboratory director; they should be able to identify the person that is responsible for providing access to new users.

If you are a public health staff member, you and your supervisor must complete the PANEDSS Authorization Request Form to obtain access to PA-NEDSS. Contact the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or <a href="mailto:ra-dhNEDSS@pa.gov">ra-dhNEDSS@pa.gov</a> for the proper form.

## 2.5. Security and Confidentiality

PA-NEDSS is a web-based application. Several layers of security are provided including automatic log-off after 30 minutes of idle time and intrusion detection systems. The following security precautions are in place:

- Each user must register in the system once a process that takes less than 15 minutes.
- A user may not keep PA-NEDSS open for more than 30 minutes without entering
  data or navigating within the application. If a user steps away from the computer
  without logging off, the application will automatically log the user out of PANEDSS after 30 minutes. Note: Logging off or being automatically logged off due
  to session inactivity will result in lost data. All data entered since your last save
  will be lost.
- Users must change their PA-NEDSS password every 60 days. The system will notify the user at each log on of an impending password expiration beginning 25 days prior to the expiration date.
- Users must select a security question and answer when registering with PA-NEDSS. The chosen security question must be answered correctly when the user contacts the PA-NEDSS Help Desk requesting patient or account-specific assistance. The security question and answer assist PA-NEDSS Help Desk staff to positively identify the user.
- PA-NEDSS resides on the Commonwealth's system, and has all the protection that the Commonwealth offers for other secure applications, including intrusion detection.



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To help ensure confidentiality, only users with "need to know" privileges have access to data entered into the system. For example, an attending physician can view previously entered reports for a patient submitted by his organization only; public health staff can only view information for conditions within their program area (such as Infectious Diseases or STDs) and their responsible jurisdiction.



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# 3. Business Process Changes

This section describes the changes made to the legacy business processes with PA-NEDSS. The following topics are covered:

- Systems impacted by PA-NEDSS
- · Online disease reporting and investigation
- Reporting and analyzing data
- Receiving alerts

#### 3.1. Systems Impacted by PA-NEDSS

PA-NEDSS replaced the following systems used by public health staff to report and track public health diseases in the past:

- Pennsylvania Electronic Telecommunications Surveillance System PETSS
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases Management Information System STD\*MIS
- Tuberculosis Information Management System TIMS
- Pennsylvania Lead Lab Data Management System PALL
- HIV/AIDS Reporting System HARS

#### 3.2. Online Disease Reporting and Investigation

With PA-NEDSS, the disease reporting community, including providers, hospitals, and laboratories, report diseases online. Investigators also have the ability to start disease reports and investigations. Disease cards and forms should no longer be mailed or faxed to the Department of Health for conditions that are reportable via PA-NEDSS. Once a report has been entered online, it is routed to the appropriate jurisdiction, and the report is assigned to a public health staff member for review. The public health staff member starts an investigation if appropriate, and links related patient reports to the investigation. The public health staff member also enters any additional information collected for an investigation in PA-NEDSS.

Case management functionality in PA-NEDSS allows public health staff to track patient treatment and follow-up details. Designated individuals are able to conduct searches for duplicate patient records and merge selected patients.

#### 3.3. Reporting and Analyzing Data

PA-NEDSS offers tools to public health investigators to perform detailed data analysis. Select disease reporters are also granted access to aggregate public health data. These tools are known as Analysis & Reporting functionality, and can be found by selecting the **Analysis and Reports** button at the top of the Welcome to PA-NEDSS Home Page. Once on this screen, click the <u>Analyze and View with Cognos</u> link to open an Analysis and Reporting session.

If you require access to the reports available for disease reporters, please contact the PANEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or <a href="mailto:ra-dhNEDSS@pa.gov">ra-dhNEDSS@pa.gov</a>.

#### 3.4. Receiving Alerts

By registering with PA-NEDSS, users become part of the Health Alert Network (HAN). The HAN provides health alerts, advisories, and updates directly from the PA DOH. Currently,



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PA-NEDSS is no longer a primary channel for health alerting. This functionality continues to exist within PA-NEDSS and will be utilized in the event that a back-up system is needed. In the event that PA-NEDSS is utilized to distribute health alerts, users will receive an email with the health alert text. If the subject is confidential, the e-mail will instruct you to log on to PA-NEDSS to read the alert. Once logged on, users will see the alert subject displayed in the health Alerts box at the top of the Welcome to PA-NEDSS Home Page. Users will be able to click the **Alerts** button at the top of the screen to read the entire message.



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# 4. Guidelines for Using PA-NEDSS

This section provides general guidelines for using PA-NEDSS and covers the following topics:

- System registration
- User name and password specifications
- Log on failures
- Printing from PA-NEDSS
- Removing access to PA-NEDSS
- User security access
- Log off policy

#### 4.1. System Registration

#### 4.1.1. For Prime Contacts of a hospital or laboratory

Obtaining access to PA-NEDSS is a three-step process. Once the Prime Contact has registered, they can designate other individuals to report on behalf of the organization.

**First, be designated by the organization as the Prime Contact.** Hospital administration will select the Prime Contact for the hospital, and the Laboratory Director will select the Prime Contact for the laboratory. The information is then communicated to PA DOH by emailing RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov or contacting the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171.

**Second, the PA DOH will provide registration information to the Prime Contact.** The new Prime Contact will receive two e-mails from the PA DOH Security Officer providing the pass code and registration number. This information should not be shared with anyone.

**Third, register in PA-NEDSS.** Click the <u>Activate your account here</u> link on the PA-NEDSS Home Page at <a href="https://www.nedss.state.pa.us/nedss/default.aspx">https://www.nedss.state.pa.us/nedss/default.aspx</a> and register using the registration number and pass code provided.

PA-NEDSS will ask new users to create a user name and password. Users should never share this logon information with others or allow others to log on to PA-NEDSS using their information. Sharing logon information is strictly prohibited. The user will also be asked to enter the organization's Tax ID and/or NPI Number, his/her first name, last name, e-mail address, and telephone number. In addition, the user will be required to set a security question and answer to assist the PA-NEDSS Help Desk in positively identifying the user when calling to request patient or account-specific assistance.

# 4.1.2. For a hospital or laboratory Prime Contact or a private-practice physician to designate other disease reporters

Log on to PA-NEDSS, click the **Administration** button and click the <u>Add Designees</u> link. You must identify the location(s) from which the designee will be reporting and provide the name and e-mail address of the designee. After clicking the Add button, check the **Print** box to print the account information, and the **E-mail** box to forward the registration number and pass code information to the new designee. The system will generate the registration number and pass code for the designee to use when registering in PA-NEDSS.

**Note:** It is better to choose BOTH just in case the e-mail ends up in a spam folder and is deleted accidentally or in case there are system issues. The designee should then follow the procedures stated below to register.

#### 4.1.3. PA-NEDSS designee registration (not hospital or lab Prime Contact)

You will receive notification from the Prime Contact of your organization or an e-mail from PA-NEDSS indicating that you have been designated to be a user of PA-NEDSS. This



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notification will provide you with your registration number and pass code that you must use to register in PA-NEDSS.

To register in PA-NEDSS, click the <u>Activate your account here</u> link on the PA-NEDSS Home Page at <a href="https://www.nedss.state.pa.us">https://www.nedss.state.pa.us</a> and follow the on screen instructions, using the registration number and pass code provided in the initial e-mail informing you of your designation as a PA-NEDSS user.

You will be asked to create a user name and password. Do not share your logon information with others or allow others to log on to PA-NEDSS using your information. Sharing logon information is strictly prohibited. You will also be asked to enter your organization's Tax ID or NPI Number (if your Prime Contact has not already done so), your first name, last name, e-mail address, and telephone number. In addition, you will be required to set a security question and answer to assist the PA-NEDSS Help Desk in positively identifying you when calling to request patient or account-specific assistance.

#### 4.1.4. For public health employees

Obtain the NEDSS Authorization Request Form. State employees and municipalities can contact the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or <a href="mailto:RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov">RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov</a> to obtain this form.

Once this form is completed and approved, you will receive an e-mail with your pass code. After receiving this e-mail, a second e-mail will be sent to you with your registration number. Once you have your pass code and registration number, you can register in PANEDSS

To register in PA-NEDSS, click the <u>Activate your account here</u> link on the PA-NEDSS Home Page at <a href="https://www.nedss.state.pa.us">https://www.nedss.state.pa.us</a> and register using the registration number and pass code provided.

You will be asked to create a user name and password. Do not share your logon information with others or allow others to log on to PA-NEDSS using your information. Sharing logon information is strictly prohibited. You will also be asked to enter your first name, last name, e-mail address and telephone number. In addition, you will be required to set a security question and answer to assist the PA-NEDSS Help Desk in positively identifying you when calling to request patient or account-specific assistance.

#### 4.2. User Name and Password Specifications

#### 4.2.1. User name and special characteristics

Your user name is not case sensitive. It must begin with a letter and use only letters (a-z), numbers (0-9), and must contain NO spaces. There is no limit for the number of characters in a username.



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#### 4.2.2. Minimum password length and special characteristics

Your password is case sensitive and must be at least 12 characters long containing at least one number and at least one uppercase and one lowercase letter (A-Z, a-z), and must contain NO spaces. Your password may not contain your user name or your first or last name.

Example of an acceptable password: "Password2018".

#### 4.2.3. Changing your Password

You will be prompted to change your password every 60 days, or the first time you log on past the 60-day limit. PA-NEDSS does not allow you to re-use the same password for at least six password changes.

To change your password before you are prompted, click the <u>Change Password</u> link on the PA-NEDSS Administration screen.

#### 4.2.4. Forgetting your Password and Using the Password Hint

It is recommended that you create a password hint when you initially register in the application. If you forget your password, but entered a password hint during the registration process, you may click the <u>Forgot Your Password?</u> link on the PA-NEDSS Home Page and your password hint will be e-mailed to you to remind you of your password.

#### 4.3. Log On Failures

After three unsuccessful attempts at logging on to the application, users are locked out. Wait 30 minutes before attempting to log on again. If you still cannot remember your password or are still unable to log on to PA-NEDSS, contact the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or <a href="mailto:RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov">RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov</a> for further assistance.

#### 4.4. Printing from PA-NEDSS

To print any screen in the application, click the **Print Page** icon at the top right corner of each screen. To print pop-up windows click the **Print Page** icon that appears at the top right corner of the window. If you do not see the icon, right click anywhere on the window and select **Print**.

#### 4.5. Removing Access from PA-NEDSS

#### 4.5.1. If the Prime Contact leaves the organization

Someone from the Prime Contact's department must contact the organization's administration and the PA DOH Security Officer. Another Prime Contact must be selected at this time. An existing designee may be moved to the Prime Contact position.

The PA DOH Security Officer must be notified immediately. This initial contact will alert the PA DOH Security Officer to invalidate the Prime Contact's user name. To contact the PA DOH Security Officer, you can contact the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or <a href="mailto:RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov">RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov</a> or click the <a href="Motify DOH of Staffing Changes">Notify DOH of Staffing Changes</a> link on the PA-NEDSS Administration screen.

Once the new Prime Contact is selected, notify the PA DOH Security Officer. The PA DOH Security Officer can then provide the new Prime Contact with registration information, if needed, and guide them in taking over Prime Contact responsibilities.

#### 4.5.2. If a PA-NEDSS user leaves or no longer needs PA-NEDSS access



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The Prime Contact or another designated individual should contact the PA DOH Security Officer. The PA DOH Security Officer can be reached by clicking the <u>Notify DOH of Staffing Changes</u> link on the PA-NEDSS Administration screen. The PA DOH Security Officer can also be contacted via the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or <u>RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov</u> and requesting the PA DOH Security Officer.

The PA DOH Security Officer will disable the person's user name. Once the user name is invalidated, the user cannot log on to PA-NEDSS.

The Prime Contact needs to keep track of PA-NEDSS users for their organization and report any changes to the PA DOH Security Officer. The PA DOH Security Officer will also run bimonthly reports summarizing PA-NEDSS users and verify these names with Prime Contacts to ensure the list of active users is up to date.

## 4.6. User Security Access

#### 4.6.1. If you switch to a different hospital or health system

Immediately notify your current Prime Contact and your future Prime Contact. Your current Prime Contact will arrange to have your user name that is affiliated with your current organization invalidated.

Your future Prime Contact will provide you with registration information for your new organization.

#### 4.6.2. To change user privileges or data access rights for public health staff

Complete the PA-NEDSS Authorization Request Form with the requested changes and have the changes approved by your supervisor. To obtain this form, contact the PA DOH Security Officer or the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or <a href="mailto:RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov">RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov</a>. It is the same form used to request access to PA-NEDSS for new users.

#### 4.7. Log Off Policy

If logged on to PA-NEDSS and inactive for 30 minutes, the system will automatically log you off. At this point, any unsaved information will be lost. PA-NEDSS prompts users to renew the 30-minute session when two minutes are remaining.



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#### 5. PA-NEDSS FAQs

This section provides answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about PA-NEDSS. Topics covered include:

- Registering
- Security and Regulations
- Entering disease reports
- Information Access and Accession Numbers

#### 5.1. Registering

Question: What should I do if this is the first time I have heard of PA-NEDSS, and I do not know who the Prime Contact for my organization is?

Answer: If you work in a hospital, contact the head of infection control. If you work in a laboratory, contact the laboratory director. The head of infection control or the laboratory director should be able to identify the person at your organization that is responsible for providing access to new users. If your question is still not answered, you may contact the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 or RA-DHNEDSS@pa.gov.

Question: When should I start using PA-NEDSS?

Answer: As of November 17, 2003 PA-NEDSS is the mandatory electronic reporting application for Pennsylvania. You should start using PA-NEDSS immediately to submit all reportable diseases to the Pennsylvania Department of Health. All laboratories and hospitals must comply with the Commonwealth's disease reporting regulations in the interest of public health. The following links are available to provide more information regarding disease reporting compliance.

Disease Reporting Regulations:

http://www.pabulletin.com/secure/data/vol32/32-4/161d.html

Notice Regarding Electronic Reporting:

http://www.pabulletin.com/secure/data/vol33/33-20/941.html

Question: Right now, I am the only one who does reporting for my hospital (e.g. an infection control nurse). Do we need a laboratory Prime Contact or other designees?

Answer: There should be a Prime Contact established for the laboratory, in addition to the clinical part of the hospital. The laboratory is a separately licensed organization and must follow separate disease reporting regulations. Hospital users can report both clinical and laboratory data using PA-NEDSS.

We suggest that each organization have at least two individuals registered in PA-NEDSS. There needs to be one Prime Contact and at least one designee. A designee is an individual that the Prime Contact designates to do reporting on behalf of the organization. Even if this designee will not report in PA-NEDSS, the designee will serve as a back up to ensure that disease reporting is continued in the event that the Prime Contact is absent.

Question: We have many laboratory technicians. Should they all be designees who are able to report?

Answer: The number of people identified as designees is up to your organization. At present, there is no limit to the number of designees per organization. An organization with



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many technicians may want to make sure that at least two individuals per shift have been designated to report diseases online.

Remember that the Prime Contact (or another appointed individual) must keep track of employment status. Therefore, if a person leaves your organization or no longer has a need to report, the PA DOH Security Officer must be contacted immediately. The PA DOH Security Officer will invalidate the person's user name. This will prevent the ex-employee from being able to use PA-NEDSS.

Question: How should physicians working at a hospital register in PA-NEDSS?

Answer: Hospital-based physicians should be registered as designees of the hospital and report on behalf of that organization. To add a physician as a designee, the organization's Prime Contact would enter the physician's name, e-mail address, and user name on the Add Designees screen within PA-NEDSS.

Interns (first year physicians) will need to be designated by their hospital or another physician if they want to report in PA-NEDSS.

Question: If I am an employee who is affiliated with different facilities or locations, do I need to get different registration information?

Answer: Yes, if you are a hospital or laboratory user you must re-register so that you can report on behalf of the appropriate organization. Your user name is associated with one licensed organization, so you are effectively reporting under the organization's license number. If you move from one licensed hospital to another, even within the same health system, you need to re-register.

If you are a physician with privileges at multiple hospitals, do not become a designee of any organization. Instead, request registration information as a private practice physician.

Question: I do not have an e-mail address. What should I do?

Answer: If you do not have an e-mail address, you should obtain one. If your organization does not have an e-mail address assigned to you, you can obtain one at a variety of sites on the Internet (e.g. <a href="www.yahoo.com">www.yahoo.com</a>, <a href="www.yahoo.com">www.hotmail.com</a>, <a href="www.yahoo.com">www.lycos.com</a>, etc.). Having your own e-mail address allows you to receive important PA-NEDSS updates.

#### 5.2. Security and Regulations

Question: How will PA-NEDSS ensure security of information?

Answer: PA-NEDSS is a web-based application. Only people with "need to know" privileges will have access to data once it has been entered. Public health staff is only able to view information within their program area (such as infectious diseases) and their geographic jurisdiction. Several layers of security exist including automatic log-off after 30 minutes of non-use and intrusion detection systems.

Question: I am concerned about letting everyone see the data that my organization has reported. Is there a way that we can restrict what others see?

Answer: One solution is to set up sub-organizations e.g. "Hospital X – Emergency Room." The Prime Contact of this sub-organization can then designate infection control staff as designees of the sub-organizations if infection control needs to have access.

Furthermore, each user from an organization is only allowed to view and modify patient information entered into PA-NEDSS by other users from the same organization. (Note: a hospital laboratory and the rest of the hospital are considered separate organizations because they are licensed separately.) However, if you and your associated organizations



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(reference labs, hospital labs, hospital clinics) use accession numbers when entering test results, the hospital and physicians can access the laboratory's reports to view the test results.

Public health staff members are allowed to access information on patients that reside in their geographic jurisdiction or in another jurisdiction on a report-by-report basis.

Question: Can I use someone else's user name and password since I will not be doing very much disease reporting?

Answer: You cannot enter data using someone else's user name. Doing so is considered a breach of security. The main purpose for registering is to ensure that information being entered into PA-NEDSS can be traced back to the person who is entering the information.

Question: If an employee who is a PA-NEDSS user leaves the facility permanently, what should the organization do?

Answer: If an employee leaves your organization, the Prime Contact must notify the PA DOH Security Officer of this immediately. The PA DOH Security Officer will then invalidate the PA-NEDSS user name for that employee in PA-NEDSS. If the user is also your organization's Prime Contact, please see Section 4.5, Removing Access to PA-NEDSS.

#### 5.3. Entering Disease Reports

Question: What do I need to report in PA-NEDSS?

Answer: Most infectious diseases, vaccine preventable diseases, sexually transmitted diseases as well as lead poisoning, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS are reportable via PA-NEDSS. A link to a complete list of PA reportable conditions is located on the Welcome screen of PA-NEDSS. Any information, including diagnosis, onset date, test results, treatment and demographic information that were previously reported to local health departments, the PA DOH and/or the CDC is now to be reported through PA-NEDSS via the Internet. Once a patient is suspected of having a condition, the patient's condition and additional details should be entered into PA-NEDSS to generate a report that can be viewed by the appropriate health department.

Animal bites and cancer are **not** reportable through PA-NEDSS at present. If a disease/condition is not listed in PA-NEDSS, you should continue to report it as you normally do.



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Question: How long does it take to enter a disease report into PA-NEDSS?

Answer: It may take less than five minutes for a laboratory user to enter a disease report for a new patient. Physicians and hospitals usually have access to additional information, such as the patient's symptoms, treatments, or risk factors. Therefore, the time to complete a full report may be longer for these users since more detail can and should be entered. Information provided upfront reduces the time it takes to respond to phone or e-mail inquiries from public health staff at a later point in time.

Question: What happens if test results are entered incorrectly or have changed since being entered into PA-NEDSS?

Answer: If you notice the mistake prior to submitting the report to the PA DOH or prior to PA DOH's review of the data, correct the information while in edit mode for the disease report.

**Note**: You cannot edit any data submitted on a disease report once it has been submitted and viewed by the PA DOH.

If you notice the mistake after the report has been viewed by public health staff, contact your local health department immediately. This is critical, because they may already be taking action on what was incorrectly entered.

Question: If I am in the middle of a report and my session expires, do I lose what I have entered?

Answer: Yes, you lose everything you have entered since the last time you saved. So, we suggest that you save frequently - especially if you think you might be called away from the computer. You may click the 'Renew Session' link at the top right of each screen to restart the clock at 30 minutes.

Question: How does the system keep from duplicating records? Ex. Jack Doe, John Doe? Answer: Duplicate records are an inevitable by-product of a web-based application with multiple user groups. PA-NEDSS has been designed with this kept in mind. Public health staff members and disease reporters all play different roles in managing duplicate patients. Before entering a new patient, you should perform a patient/contact search to determine if the patient/contact already exists in PA-NEDSS. Each time you enter information to create a disease report, the system automatically checks the information you entered against existing information in the database. If there is an exact match on first name, last name, date of birth, and gender, the existing patient will be brought up, and you may add the new suspected condition. If no match is found, you will enter information and create a new patient.

We have implemented a process called "de-duplication," which examines data more closely, looking for duplicate or "similar" people (Robert vs. Bob). A representative from PA DOH will be responsible for finding and merging duplicate patients in the event that an exact match is not found, but duplicates exist.



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Question: What do I do if my reference laboratory is out of state?

Answer: You must ask them to cooperate with PA-NEDSS and use an accession number. If they are handling specimens for Pennsylvania patients, they have the same reporting obligations as laboratories within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania according to disease regulations.

#### 5.4. Information Access and Accession Numbers

Question: What is an accession number and how is it used?

Answer: For confidentiality reasons, PA-NEDSS does not allow other organizations to view information your organization has entered. However, laboratories, physicians and hospitals may need to view information, such as test results, for the same patient. The accession number along with the patient's last name provides a way for an organization to access a patient report created by a different organization. A clinician may use the accession search option and enter the accession number and the patient's last name to locate the patient and view information that the laboratory has entered.

The accession number is the patient's laboratory specimen number. Accession numbers are not generated by PA-NEDSS.

Question: If I report a condition, and a laboratory submits the test result, will I be able to view the result?

Answer: Yes, if you have the accession number and patient's last name, you will be able to view the test results. The laboratory should enter the accession number when the disease report is created.

Question: Can I edit a report after it has been submitted?

Answer: Once public health staff has viewed the report, disease reporters are no longer able to edit a disease report. Reporters are currently able to make modifications to the clinical information they submitted in the disease report until health department staff view the report.



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# 6. Contact Information

Refer to Figure 6-1 for PA-NEDSS contact information. It contains web sites, e-mail addresses, mailing information, and a telephone number for the PA-NEDSS Help Desk.



# PA Electronic Disease Surveillance System (PA-NEDSS) Contact Information

Technical Issues: <a href="mailto:ra-dhNEDSSTech@pa.gov">ra-dhNEDSSTech@pa.gov</a>
All Other Inquiries: <a href="mailto:ra-dhNEDSS@pa.gov">ra-dhNEDSS@pa.gov</a>

Help Desk: (717) 783-9171

Mailing Address: Pennsylvania Department of Health

Health & Welfare Building ATTN: *Applicable Department* 

625 Forster Street Harrisburg, PA 17120

Figure 6-1: PA-NEDSS Contact Information.