

# VIRGINIA INFLUENZA SENTINEL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

*VDH needs your help to monitor how influenza is affecting our communities. Healthcare providers are encouraged to participate in VDH's Sentinel Surveillance Program to help monitor influenza trends and to identify what influenza virus components should be included in the next seasonal influenza vaccine. Join us in this important public health work!*



## About the Sentinel Surveillance Program

Each year, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) partners with outpatient healthcare providers to participate in the Sentinel Surveillance Program. During respiratory season, participating providers help VDH monitor influenza trends and describe how influenza is affecting the community.

## What is sentinel surveillance?

In this program, participating healthcare providers collect respiratory specimens from people who present with an influenza-like illness (ILI). ILI symptoms include fever (100°F or greater) and cough and/or sore throat. These specimens are tested at the state public health laboratory, the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS), to monitor the viruses circulating and to look for any potential issues of public health concern. Specimen collection is conducted during active flu season which is usually from early October to mid-May.

## Why is sentinel surveillance important?

Because influenza viruses are constantly changing, ongoing data analysis and characterization of the viruses circulating in our communities is essential. Surveillance programs can identify major changes in the virus, referred to as antigenic shift, that can result in a virus that is different from the circulating viruses. These data can help public health professionals make informed decisions and guide appropriate public health responses.

## Who can participate?

VDH is looking for two to three provider offices per [health region](#) to participate. All providers that see patients with acute respiratory illnesses are welcome to participate, including outpatient primary and urgent care practices, and university health systems. Providers serving rural communities or other underserved communities are especially encouraged to participate.

## What would participation mean for my practice?

Participants would submit specimens from patients who meet ILI criteria weekly to DCLS using provided specimen collection supplies and shipping materials. For public health surveillance, ILI consists of a fever of 100°F or more with a sore throat and/or a cough.

Ideally, each provider is able to submit between 10-15 specimens per week, during the influenza season.

The cost of this program is covered by VDH and DCLS – there is no cost to your practice or your patients.

*We need your help to make this happen!*

## How do I sign up?

You can fill out this [survey](#) to provide your facility's contact information. Once your information is received, the Sentinel Surveillance Program team will contact you to discuss your participation.

For any additional questions, please feel free to email VDH's Central Office at [flu@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:flu@vdh.virginia.gov).



## Contact Information

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