



4. Understanding Clinical Data and Workflow

Defining Data Elements Worksheet

One of the fundamental decisions you must make when developing an EHR-based surveillance system revolves around determining and defining the required data elements for the system and how they will be encoded. Structured data is key to consistency in data analysis and to support computer analysis. In addition, careful definition of the concepts and the values that represent the data elements ensure compatibility of data from different systems, or at a minimum, provide a way to map them to each other.

Surveillance system goals

First, articulate your surveillance goals in a way that makes clear what data you need to collect. As importantly, those goals should help you determine what data you don't need to collect; after all, every data element you collect costs you and your providers' time and money.

Surveillance Program Goal(s):

Population of interest

Define the population being surveilled, in terms of characteristics such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, geography and condition to help further clarify required data elements.
