

Houston has become the first location under the Digital Bridge initiative to successfully launch an electronic approach that allows health care providers and public health agencies to exchange data automatically. This real-time, automated process promises to improve the timeliness, accuracy and completeness of data, preventing dangerous disease outbreaks. Partners involved in the Houston demonstration include Houston Health Department, Houston Methodist and Epic Systems.

“The flow of important disease-related information between health care and public health will lead to better care and faster, more effective population health interventions,” said John Lumpkin, senior vice president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a Digital Bridge funder.

The Digital Bridge electronic case reporting (eCR) approach works with existing electronic health records (EHRs) to flag potential reportable disease cases and digitally send them to the appropriate public health agency using a central decision support service managed by the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and the Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE). Prior to eCR, case reports were typically created through time-intensive manual processes (e.g., fax or mail), creating slow response times and a burden on health care providers to report cases.

“We are extremely excited and proud of this milestone we have reached with Houston being the first in the U.S. to implement eCR,” said Laura Conn, director of health information strategy at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a key stakeholder participating in Digital Bridge. “This is truly a critical advancement in public health surveillance.”

Other Digital Bridge demonstration locations include California, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York and Utah. Deloitte Consulting and the Public Health Informatics Institute provide project management support for the Digital Bridge initiative.

See the [official announcement](#) from Houston Methodist.