



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)

December 17, 2009

Patrick J. McConnon, MPH
Executive Director
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
National Headquarters
2872 Woodcock Boulevard, Suite 303
Atlanta, GA 30341

Dear Pat:

Thank you for your letter to Dr. Thomas Frieden conveying a copy of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) position statement 09-SI-03, "Recommendations for the Implementation of Electronic Laboratory Reporting in the United States." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is aware of the many issues impacting electronic laboratory reporting (ELR), and we are committed to working with our partners to enable electronic laboratory information exchange among all public health providers.

Over the course of the years, the CDC's National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS) program has committed resources to address ELR nationally by setting policy and developing standards, as well as providing tools, technical assistance, training, and funding to state and local health departments implementing electronic data exchange of laboratory reports.

In addition, the NEDSS project, along with other national initiatives (BioSense, National Healthcare Safety Network, Public Health Interoperability Project, etc.), has included ELR as part of its strategic plan. Each of these programs recognizes the need to work together in a coordinated effort to succeed in implementing ELR nationally.

However, we realize that there is more work to be done, and we do agree with the points made in the position statement regarding strategic planning, workforce capacity, funding, and technological solutions. In the next few months, the new Office of Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services (OSELs) will work with CDC programs (i.e., Biosurveillance Coordination Unit, BioSense, NEDSS, and Infectious and Non-Infectious programs) and public health partners to establish a task force to develop an improved strategy on ELR activities, including defining meaningful use of the ELR.

Thank you for sharing your position with us. I appreciate CSTE's interest in these matters and look forward to collaborating in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve".

Stephen B. Thacker, M.D., M.Sc.
Acting Deputy Director for Surveillance, Epidemiology and Laboratory Service