

Influenza Surveillance Explained

Kansas law requires doctors and laboratories to report many types of infectious disease to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). This is called “passive” surveillance.

Although it is an important, highly communicable disease, influenza is not reportable by law. (There is one exception; influenza deaths in children under 18 years old is reportable by law.) KDHE uses a different type of surveillance, known as “sentinel” surveillance, to track the illness throughout the year.

Sentinel Surveillance

KDHE recruits different types of organizations to be sentinel sites for flu surveillance, including hospitals, physicians’ offices, nursing homes, and county health departments.

Each sentinel site tracks the number of individuals with Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) that they have seen in their facility. **The symptoms of ILI are defined as:**

- **Fever 100° degrees Fahrenheit or higher, AND**
- **Cough, AND / OR**
- **Sore throat**

Every week, the sentinel sites report the total number of ILI cases seen at their facility to KDHE; in turn, KDHE reports the amount of ILI seen in the state to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In the event of an influenza pandemic, schools may also be asked to become emergency sentinel sites, and report flu activity to KDHE or to your county health department.

A sentinel school will be asked to:

- Monitor daily attendance for flu-like illness and flu-related absences
- Log absences due to flu-like illness
- Send a **weekly** report (via fax) to KDHE or to your county health department

Active Surveillance

A third type of surveillance, “active” surveillance, may also be employed during a severe outbreak of influenza. When implemented, KDHE or your county health department may contact hospitals, physicians, or schools directly to ask questions about flu activity. KDHE may develop new forms, tailored specifically to the new outbreak, to aid schools in data collection.