



Health and Community Services

Cynthia Foley

Council Initiated:

Yes

No

ECAF: 2023-1034
Ordinance: 23-091

Type:

- Contract
- Board Appt.
- Code Amendment
- Budget Action
- Other

Requested Handling:

- Normal
- Expedite
- Urgent

Fund Source:

- General Fund
- Other
- N/A

Executive Rec:

- Approve
- Do Not Approve
- N/A

Approved as to

Form:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

Subject: Data sharing agreement for accessing Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-Based Epidemics (ESSENCE) data

Scope: The ordinance would authorize the execution of a data sharing agreement between Snohomish County and the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) for accessing ESSENCE data.

The Health Department will use this agreement to surveil communicable diseases, prevent injuries, and access the State's opioid overdose dashboard through the Rapid Health Information Network (RHINO).

A Proposed Substitute Ordinance was developed by the Health Department. The original ordinance states that the agreement provides access to opioid overdose data. The substitute version describes broader access to ESSENCE data sets and expanded programmatic uses for the data. This reflects that access to additional data sets is allowed under the agreement (see Exhibit I of the contract for more detail).

Duration: Execution until October 31, 2024

Fiscal Impact: Current Year Multi-Year N/A

Authority Granted: Authorizes the Executive, or a designee, to execute the data sharing agreement.

Background: Syndromic surveillance¹ is a system for collecting data from emergency departments in nearly real time. ESSENCE is a syndromic surveillance database for early detection of outbreaks and other trends. Over 90% of emergency departments enter visit information into the system within 24 hours. This data is shared with the Centers of Disease Control to contribute to the national picture of public health.

RCW 43.70.057 requires the Department of Health to collect syndromic surveillance data. Public agencies may access this information if a data sharing agreement is in place and confidentiality is maintained.

Potential uses for syndromic surveillance data include:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of population health interventions
- Tracking outbreaks and emerging conditions
- Identifying notifiable conditions (e.g., Zika, measles)
- Monitoring trends in illnesses that are not reportable (e.g., varicella, Guillain Barré Syndrome)

¹ [Syndromic Surveillance \(RHINO\) | Washington State Department of Health](#)



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- Monitoring asthma-related emergency department (ED) visits
- Monitoring trends in traffic-related injuries
- Monitoring trends in opioid overdose incidents
- Tracking ED visits for respiratory irritation during wildfire events that impact air quality

Requested Action: Move Proposed Ordinance 23-091 and Proposed Substitute Ordinance 23-091 to the October 4th GLS agenda, under administrative matters, to set time and date for a Public Hearing.