



Information Technology Survey

**An Assessment of Computers and
Computer Programs in Health Departments**

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**Turning Point Information Technology Collaborative
American Institutes for Research**

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Information Technology Survey

This survey is designed to investigate the use of information technology (computers and computer programs) by health departments across the United States. The information collected will be used to create a **free resource** for public health professionals. The resource will help health departments of any size determine what information technology is available to help plan, implement, and evaluate the ten essential services of public health listed on the back of this survey. The resource to be created will allow health departments to determine, for example, what computer programs exist for a given activity and how nurses, administrators, sanitarians, and information technology staff members view those programs. Health departments may then decide to gather information about specific programs in order to make a decision about how useful those programs will be for their own work.

The survey is divided into **four** sections.*

- Section 1 is for an administrator or his/her designee.
- Section 2 is for a clinical/medical services staff person.
- Section 3 is for an environmental/sanitation staff person.
- Section 4 is for the local computer person in your office.

Each of the sections should be answered by a staff member who use computers in your health department. Sections 1, 2, and 3 ask about activities related to the essential public health services listed on the back cover of this survey. For each activity, we ask you to please tell us what computer program you are using and evaluate the usefulness of that program. For each evaluation, we ask you to indicate how much you Agree or Disagree with the statement by choosing a number between 1 and 5 or indicate that the statement is not applicable.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	5	0

Health departments come in many shapes and sizes. This survey is intended for ALL health departments. If you have any questions or concerns related to the applicability of the survey to your health department, please contact our survey technical assistance at 1-866-219-4506, Monday through Friday between 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. EST.

Thank you for your help in completing this survey.

Enclosed is a stamped, addressed envelope in which to return the survey to us. Only aggregate data from this survey will be reported in the resource to be created. No individual respondent will be identified, but your office may be contacted for more information if your health department has developed unique computer applications that may be of benefit to other health departments.

For information about the Turning Point Initiative and the Information Technology Collaborative, please see our Web sites <http://www.turningpointprogram.org/> and <http://www.infotech.net.org/>.

* Some health departments share administrators and other professional staff. As we are interested in the viewpoints and perceived needs of both large and small health departments, we ask that respondents who work at more than one health department complete each survey that is sent, one for each health department.

Directions and Examples

Below is an example of how to fill out the tables on the following pages.

1. Identify what, if any, computer programs are used with each activity (work down the Program Name column).

Activity	Program Name* Please write the name of the main program you use for each of the following activities. Leave blank if you do not use a computer program with this activity. Write N/A if your health department does not do the activity.	1 = Strongly Agree			
		Maintaining patient health information	Tracking services provided	Tracking the cost of services provided	Billing purposes
Maintain vital statistics for your jurisdiction	VitalStat	1	2	2	0
Maintain a demographic profile of your jurisdiction	VitalStat	1	2	2	0
Assess the availability of health care in your jurisdiction	VitalStat				
Assess your department's ability to provide health care	Word				
Assess the quality of services your office provides	N/A				
Analyze data about diseases/health conditions					
Receive specific disease reports/health alerts	Word				
Map diseases or other health conditions in your jurisdiction	N/A				
Disseminate information to health care providers	Assessment Pro				
Disseminate information to specific high-risk groups	Alert Tracker				
Disseminate information for public consumption in general	Word				
Determine health-related priorities for your jurisdiction					
Document non-financial input from community partners					
Document non-financial assistance provided to community partners	Excel				
Train health department staff	Brain Trainer				
Train people outside your health department	PowerPoint				
Outreach services					
Please list and evaluate any important activities not already listed in the space below:					

3. Please complete a row for each activity performed by your health department, even if you have already evaluated the program for a different activity.

Please feel free to consult with other staff members when making your evaluations.

Section 1a: This section is to be completed by an administrator or his/her designee.

This information will be used to identify health department similarities and create a searchable database.

1. What term best describes your health department's jurisdiction? (check N/A if your department is a statewide office)
 - Urban
 - Suburban
 - Rural
 - Frontier (very low population density)
 - Not applicable (statewide office)

2. What term best describes your community?
 - Agricultural
 - Industrial
 - Agricultural and Industrial mix
 - Tourist
 - None of the above (please specify)

3. Approximately how many people are in your health department's jurisdiction? (i.e., your community's population size)

4. What percent of your jurisdiction's population are in the following age groups?
 - ____ % under 1 year
 - ____ % ages 1 to 4 years
 - ____ % ages 5 to 14 years
 - ____ % ages 15 to 24 years
 - ____ % ages 25 to 34 years
 - ____ % ages 35 to 44 years
 - ____ % ages 45 to 54 years
 - ____ % ages 55 to 64 years
 - ____ % ages 65 to 74 years
 - ____ % ages 75 to 84 years
 - ____ % ages 85 years and over

5. What is your health department's annual budget?

6. What percent of your funding comes from each source listed below?
 - ____ % from state government
 - ____ % from federal government
 - ____ % from local government
 - ____ % from fees for services
 - ____ % from private grants or contracts
 - ____ Other (please specify)

7. How many staff members are employed by your health department?
 - ____ Full-time (including temporary)
 - ____ Part-time (including temporary)

8. Is your health department considered to be a *satellite office* of a larger health department (is it dependent on another health department for funding, policy direction, staffing, etc.)?
 - Yes No

9. What, if any, other agencies provide public health services in your jurisdiction?
 - U.S. Military
 - Indian Health Service
 - Other (please specify)

10. Please describe the people you serve. (check all that apply)
 - Large number of Medicaid recipients
 - Large number of Medicare recipients
 - Large number of non-English speaking minorities
 - Large number of English speaking minorities
 - High number of non-U.S. citizens
 - Low literacy rate
 - High rate of poverty
 - High unemployment/under-employment

11. Which statement best describes how people in your community view public health?

- Very important
- Important, but not a priority
- Necessary, but do not like it
- Unnecessary
- None of the above (they do not think about public health)
- None of the above (other). Please comment.

12. In your opinion, what is the **greatest problem** your health department has with its *current* information technology (computers or computer programs)?

13. In your opinion, what is your health department's **greatest information technology need** (including computers, computer programs, or other computer-related technology)?

14. Please examine the activities listed in this survey. In your opinion, what activities, **which do currently not involve the use of computers/computer programs**, require information technology to better perform the activity? (i.e., What activities need IT?) (limit 3 activities)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

15. Do you currently have a computer program to maintain Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS) data?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

16. If YES, please write the program name and indicate if you use that program for any other activity.

17. Does your agency have a plan to ensure Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Section 1b: This section is to be completed by an administrator or his/her designee.

The information from this section will be used to provide information about what information technology is used and what is needed by health departments.

Activity	Program Name* Please write the name of the main program you use for each of the following activities. Leave blank if you do not use a computer program with this activity. Write N/A if your health department does not do the activity.	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree						
		This program is useful for:						
		Maintaining patient health information	Tracking services provided	Tracking the cost of services provided	Billing purposes	Scheduling staff	Scheduling patient appointments	Tracking health outcomes
Maintain vital statistics for your jurisdiction								
Maintain a demographic profile of your jurisdiction								
Assess the availability of health care in your jurisdiction								
Assess your department's ability to provide health care								
Assess the quality of services your office provides								
Analyze data about diseases/health conditions								
Receive specific disease reports/health alerts								
Map diseases or other health conditions in your jurisdiction								
Disseminate information to health care providers								
Disseminate information to specific high-risk groups								
Disseminate information for public consumption in general								
Determine health-related priorities for your jurisdiction								
Document non-financial input from community partners								
Document non-financial assistance provided to community partners								
Train health department staff								
Train people outside your health department								
Outreach services								
Please list and evaluate any important activities not already listed in the space below:								

* In some cases, you may use more than one computer program for an activity. For example, you may use a statewide program and a wordprocessing program. Please report only the most specialized system.

Section 2: This section is to be completed by a medical/clinical person in your office.

The information from this section will be used to provide information about what information technology is used and what is needed in health departments.

Activity	Program Name* Please write the name of the main program you use for each of the following activities. Leave blank if you do not use a computer program with this activity. Write N/A if your health department does not do the activity.	1 = Strongly Agree							2 = Agree	
		This program is useful for:								
		Maintaining patient health records	Tracking services provided	Tracking the cost of services provided	Billing purposes	Scheduling staff	Scheduling patient appointments	Tracking health outcomes		
Record vital signs of public health clinic patients										
Receive laboratory reports										
Provide hearing screening										
Provide vision screening										
Assess level of need for government programs										
Provide TB screening										
Provide immunization services										
Maintain immunization registry										
Provide STD services										
Provide HIV/AIDS services										
Provide family planning counseling										
Provide family planning services										
Provide (non-WIC) pre-natal care services										
Provide WIC services										
Provide cervical cancer screening services										
Provide breast cancer screening services										

* In some cases, you may use more than one computer program for an activity. For example, you may use a state-wide program and a wordprocessing program. Please report only the most specialized system.

Section 2 (continued): This section is to be completed by a medical/clinical person in your office.

The information from this section will be used to provide information about what information technology is used and what is needed in health departments.

Activity	Program Name* Please write the name of the main program you use for each of the following activities. Leave blank if you do not use a computer program with this activity. Write N/A if your health department does not do the activity.	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree						
		This program is useful for:						
		Maintaining patient health records	Tracking services provided	Tracking the cost of services provided	Billing purposes	Scheduling staff	Scheduling patient appointments	Tracking health outcomes
Promote physical activity								
Provide mental health counseling								
Provide school-based nursing care								
Provide dental screening								
Provide tobacco-cessation counseling								
Provide screening for diabetes								
Provide substance-abuse counseling								
Provide nutrition counseling								
Provide physical therapy services								
Provide speech therapy services								
Provide pharmacy services								
Map diseases or other health conditions in your jurisdiction								
Investigate disease outbreaks								
Outreach services								
Please list and evaluate any important activities not already listed in the space below:								

* In some cases, you may use more than one computer program for an activity. For example, you may use a state-wide program and a wordprocessing program. Please report only the most specialized system.

Section 3: This section is to be completed by an environmental/sanitation person in your office.

The information from this section will be used to provide information about what information technology is used and what is needed in health departments.

Activity	Program Name* Please write the name of the main program you use for each of the following activities. Leave blank if you do not use a computer program with this activity. Write N/A if your health department does not do the activity.	1 = Strongly Agree		2 = Agree					
		This program is useful for:							
		Maintaining client inspection information	Monitoring license/certification dates	Printing certification/licenses	Tracking services provided	Tracking the cost of services provided	Billing purposes	Scheduling staff	
Inspect food service establishments									
Inspect food processing plants/factories									
Inspect milk processing plants/factories									
Inspect beverage processing plants/factories									
Inspect child day care facilities									
Inspect adult day care facilities									
Inspect onsite sewage systems (e.g., septic tanks)									
Inspect water sewage systems									
Monitor water supply systems									
Inspect wells									
Inspect landfills									
Inspect toxic waste sites									
Inspect sites for lead contamination									
Inspect hospices									
Inspect buildings for radiological (radiation) contamination									
Map diseases or other health conditions in your jurisdiction									
Receive laboratory reports									
Investigate workplace injuries and/or deaths									
Please list and evaluate any important activities not already listed in the space below:									

* In some cases, you may use more than one computer program for an activity. For example, you may use a state-wide program and a wordprocessing program. Please report only the most specialized system.

Section 4a: This section is to be completed by the person responsible for the information technology/computers in your office.

The information from this section will be used to establish baseline computer capacity in health departments across the U.S.

1. How many people in your health department have responsibility for maintaining the office's information technology (how large is the IT department)?
 - None (private consultants only)
 - None (staff from other health departments)
 - Full-time staff
 - Part-time staff (including full-time staff only partially responsible for IT)

2. What percentage of your professional staff:
 - Have access to a computer at work
 - Must share a computer with other staff members
 - Have their own computer at work (not shared) and have internet access through that computer

3. What, if any, Internet connection does your health department most commonly use?
 - None
 - Telephone dial-up
 - T1
 - DSL
 - Cable modem
 - Other (please specify)

4. How often do you need to rely on outside technical support to fix a **software** problem?
 - Almost always
 - Often
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Almost never

5. How often do you need to rely on outside technical support to fix a **hardware** problem?
 - Almost always
 - Often
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Almost never

6. Which of the following are provided your State health department? (Check all that apply)
 - Computer **hardware** technical support for State provided computers
 - Computer **hardware** technical support for ANY computers in your health department
 - Computer **software** technical support for State provided software programs
 - Computer **software** technical support for ANY software program
 - Other (please specify)

7. Who owns the majority of computer equipment used in your office?
 - Local government (self)
 - State government
 - Federal government
 - Private company (rented or leased)
 - Other (please specify)

8. If you answered anything other than Local Government (self) for question 5, please indicate if that the owner of the computers also provides regular maintenance of the computers for your health department.
 - Yes (maintained by other)
 - No (maintained by self)
 - Don't know

9. Do you anticipate getting any **new computers** in the next 6 months?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, likely
- Don't know
- Probably not
- Definitely not

10. If YES, please describe the type of computer(s) your office will be getting (notebook, mainframe, PC, Macintosh, etc.).

11. Do you anticipate getting any **new computer programs** in the next 6 months?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, likely
- Don't know
- Probably not
- Definitely not

12. If YES, please indicate what type of program(s) you are getting, what the program will be used for (what activities), and, if possible, the name of the program(s).

Type:

- Administrative
- Medical/clinical
- Environmental
- Other (please specify)

Activities/services:

Name(s):

13. Is your health department using information technology for any training (for staff or others)?

- No
- Yes

14. If YES, please describe **who** the training is for **and what** computer(s) or computer applications are used. Please include the use of distance learning technology or any other specialized communication equipment.

15. Is your health department using information technology for any non-laboratory research purpose?

- No
- Yes

16. If YES, please describe the research and the computer(s) or computer applications used.

17. In your opinion, what kind of **computer training** (for staff members other than yourself) would best help your health department function? (Please consult other health department employees if you need to.)

18. In your opinion, what is your health department's **greatest information technology need** (including computers, computer programs, or other computer-related technology)?

Essential Public Health Services

1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues
4. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual community health efforts
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety
7. Link people to needed personal health services and ensure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable
8. Ensure a competent public health and personal health workforce
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems

Source: Public Health Functions Steering Committee, *Public Health in America*, July 1995.

See <http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/nphpsp/phdpp/10ES.htm> for background and a description of each essential public health service