**Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests for Information about Multistate Outbreaks Linked to Food and Animal Contact**

The information on this page will assist you with submitting a FOIA request regarding a specific multistate foodborne or animal contact enteric disease outbreak that can be processed quickly and efficiently. Please note that CDC is not typically involved in single state or local outbreak investigations and would not have records to share regarding these types of investigations.

Requests about Specific Outbreak Investigations

*How should I identify the investigation in my request?*

The easiest way for CDC to identify the outbreak investigation which is the subject of a FOIA is the **CDC cluster code or outbreak code**. In the absence of a CDC cluster code or outbreak code, the URL for a CDC outbreak web posting can also be used to help identify the investigation.

For example, CDC investigates many multistate outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections every year. By providing the outbreak code or URL for an outbreak web posting, CDC can quickly identify which outbreak you are requesting information about.

*What documents should I request?*

There are several types of documents that CDC routinely produces during investigations of multistate outbreaks linked to food or animal contact.

* **PulseNet line list:** CDC PulseNet maintains a listing of all sequenced isolates from ill people that meet the outbreak case definition. The line list also includes some basic demographic information and the whole genome sequencing (WGS) ID for each isolate. This list also includes non-human (e.g., food, animal, environmental) isolates that are determined to be part of the outbreak. All PulseNet sequence data is uploaded in real-time to the [National Center for Biotechnology Information](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/) website. The website is searchable by WGS ID and the raw sequence data is downloadable.
* **SEDRIC line list:** In the SEDRIC system used by public health and regulatory partners during investigations, CDC maintains a listing of all sequenced isolates from ill people in PulseNet that meet the outbreak case definition. This list also includes basic demographic, clinical outcome, and food and other exposure information.
* **Investigation timeline**: CDC creates a written timeline that outlines all major events during the investigation. The timeline frequently contains [confidential commercial information (CCI)](https://www.fda.gov/federal-state-local-tribal-and-territorial-officials/communications-outreach/information-sharing#:~:text=Back%20to%20top-,What%20is%20Confidential%20Commercial%20Information%3F,entity%20to%20whom%20it%20belongs.) that requires redaction before release.
* **Multistate call slide decks**: On conference calls with states, CDC presents a set of slides which summarize the status of the epidemiologic investigation. Occasionally, these slides contain CCI that requires redaction before release.
* **Firm call slide decks**: On conference calls with companies, CDC presents a set of slides which summarize the status of the epidemiologic investigation. These slides sometimes contain CCI that requires redaction before release.
* **Firm call scripts**: CDC prepares a script to read during conference calls with companies that summarizes the status of the epidemiologic investigation. The script sometimes contains CCI that requires redaction before release.
* **Outbreak web postings**: CDC develops public postings about some outbreaks for the CDC website.
* **PulseNet SharePoint postings:** The PulseNet SharePoint site has postings from state and local public health laboratories and CDC related to the outbreak.
* **NORS report:** Once an outbreak investigation ends, a NORS report is submitted to the Foodborne Disease Outbreak Surveillance System summarizing the disposition of an outbreak investigation, including all multistate outbreaks and outbreaks occurring within a single state.
* **Epi-2 Form (Trip Report):** The Epi-2 form summarizes the activities of an [Epidemic Intelligence Service](https://www.cdc.gov/eis/what-eis-officers-do/how-we-serve.html) field investigation. These investigations typically only occur in a localized outbreak in which a state requests assistance with a large illness sub-cluster in a multistate outbreak investigation. For multistate foodborne outbreaks these are increasingly uncommon (1-2 per year at most).
* **Close out summary:** At the end of an outbreak investigation, CDC drafts a final summary of the investigation findings to provide to other federal and state investigational partners.

Requests about Specific Sick People

*How should I identify the sick person in my request?*

The easiest way for CDC to identify documents related to a specific individual is to include the PulseNet ID or WGS ID in your request. This ID can be obtained from the health department in an individual’s state of residence. CDC does not solicit and rarely obtains personally identifiable information such as patient names or birthdates. The one exception would be if a specimen was forwarded by the state public health lab for further identification and characterization by the CDC reference laboratories. In the absence of a PulseNet ID, the State Laboratory ID (SLAB ID) is likely the second-best identifier to locate records for a specific individual but may not always be provided to CDC.

*What documents should I request?*

* **PulseNet line list row pertaining to the specific sick person**
* **SEDRIC line list row pertaining to the specific sick person**
* **Questionnaires**: You can request the questionnaires which were administered to an ill person in an outbreak. These are almost always completed by a state or local health department and include information such as patient demographics, clinical course of illness and outcomes, and food and other exposures before illness onset. It is important to note that these forms are not always submitted to CDC. Information from the questionnaires may be entered into the SEDRIC system directly by the state or local health department and would be available on a SEDRIC line list.
* **Laboratory testing data**: You can request a laboratory testing report containing information determined by CDC reference laboratories. It is important to note that most isolates are not sent to CDC for testing. If available, common test results would include identification and characterization, including phenotypic properties and subtyping information such as serovar or Shiga toxin production capabilities. CDC reference labs do not determine if a clinical isolate matches an environmental isolate such as those isolated from an implicated source.

Emails

*Can I request emails and other electronic communications related to an outbreak investigation?*

FOIA permits requesting many types of public records including email and other communications. However, because during outbreak investigations, CDC may receive commercial confidential information, trade secret information, or personally identifiable information, all email records need to be carefully reviewed and potentially redacted to prevent release of certain types of confidential information. Because of the amount of time required to identify, review, and redact email and other communications, including them in a FOIA request will likely add cost and increase turnaround time. If emails and other communications are not needed, CDC recommends not including them in FOIA requests to facilitate fast and efficient processing of FOIAs.

Related Links

[Foodborne Outbreaks](https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/)

[List of Selected Multistate Foodborne Outbreak Investigations](https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/multistate-outbreaks/outbreaks-list.html)

[US Outbreaks of Zoonotic Diseases Spread between Animals & People](https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/outbreaks.html)

[CDC PulseNet](https://www.cdc.gov/pulsenet/index.html)

[National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS)](https://wwwn.cdc.gov/norsdashboard/)

[SEDRIC: System for Enteric Disease Response, Investigation, and Coordination](https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/investigating-outbreaks/sedric.html)

[National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/)