

**IMPORTANT**  
***PLEASE contact local public health agency (LPHA)  
that oversees the hospital prior to contacting that hospital!  
This keeps LPHA in the loop and ensures  
hospitals are not double-called on the same flag!***

## Step 1: Follow up with LPHA

1. Making contact
  - a. Always contact LPHA first to keep them informed and to ensure no double-calling of hospitals for same alert. This is the jurisdiction in which the hospital is located.
  - b. Call and ask to speak with communicable disease nurse or epidemiologist or talk to known ESSENCE user in the jurisdiction.
  - c. May e-mail contact instead if you know they respond to e-mail requests in a timely manner.
2. What to say/provide
  - a. Summarize findings and be specific about why you think it needs further investigation.
  - b. E-mail figures, password protected spreadsheets, information on ESSENCE as needed. Send password in separate e-mail.
3. What to ask
  - a. Do they know of a trend/event related to this syndrome in or around their community?
  - b. Have they seen similar increases in this syndrome at sentinel sites (e.g., schools, nursing homes, other health care providers).
4. Next steps
  - a. If no further investigation is needed, agree to update each other on new findings.
  - b. Do they want to contact the hospital or do they grant permission for you to do so?  
Note: It is usually better to have LPHA contact hospital themselves
  - c. If they do not want to contact hospital or if you wish to contact them yourself, please ask for contact name and phone number at hospital to make follow up easier.
  - d. If they contact hospital themselves, please ask them to review guidelines below.

## Step 2: Follow up with Hospital

### **Hospitals are busy! Be prepared and specific.**

1. Be specific about what you have found in terms of symptoms, age groups, sex, county/location of residence.
2. Offer password-protected patient list, figures, information on ESSENCE and let them know you have a medical record number if that would help.
3. Ask if they have seen an increase in this syndrome group, especially within age, sex, geographic groups you identified.
4. Ask if they have seen an increase in lab orders or positive lab findings for any relevant conditions.
5. Ask if they have seen an increase in traffic from a nursing home, school, day care, or group home.
6. If senior epidemiologist agrees, may suggest increasing lab testing for specific conditions if no lab data are available, especially during ongoing outbreak/investigation.

## Step 3: Document and Continue to Monitor/Communicate

1. Document findings.
2. If the LPHA follows up with the hospital, ask them to please inform you of their findings.
3. If you follow up with the hospital, make sure you inform the LPHA of your findings, even if the answer from the hospital is that there is no concern about an outbreak at that time.
4. Make sure everyone involved knows that flag investigations are rare so if they see anything unusual in the coming days, they should let you know right away.