

TEPHI : Keeping Texans Safe

The **Texas Epidemic Public Health Institute (TEPHI)** is committed to keeping Texans safe and the economy strong by strengthening the capacity and resiliency of all Texas communities to respond to future infectious disease outbreaks.

Through our work, we aim to serve as a national model of regional epidemic preparedness, and lay the groundwork for a coordinated and collaborative response.



Our Background

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened our health and disrupted our way of life, significantly changing how we work, learn, socialize, and access health care. Yet, in looking back, the pandemic also offers an unprecedented opportunity to learn from response efforts at both a national and local level. We learned that Texans are resilient – and that there is more we can do to prepare. In 2021, with bipartisan support, the 87th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 1780 establishing the Texas Epidemic Public Health Institute (TEPHI) as a new state agency housed at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth), with the mission to prepare Texas communities for future infectious disease outbreaks.

Our Approach



Connecting community leaders, industry experts, & public health professionals to improve resiliency statewide



Providing **learning & training resources** to enhance the capacity of the Texas workforce and communities to prepare for future pathogen threats



Promoting **public health communications** efforts that are clear, timely, effective, & science-based



Developing **innovative systems** to detect & respond to disease outbreaks early

Collaborating with leaders in public health, science, medicine, and the community, TEPHI is analyzing the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and other major biological events to prepare Texas for the next public health emergency.

From its base within UTHealth Houston, TEPHI leverages the system's robust public health capabilities and has been able to lean into the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health's pre-established relationships with community partners and leaders. A focus on community and collaboration is woven into each of TEPHI's focus areas: **readiness, training and resources, and communications**. Below are just a few highlights of TEPHI's innovative initiatives in these areas.

TexWEB: A Comprehensive Early Detection System

Collaborating with UTHealth Houston School of Public Health & Baylor College of Medicine, TEPHI has established **TexWEB** – the **Texas Wastewater Environmental Biomonitoring** network.



- An **early detection system** for community spread of viral pathogens beyond COVID-19
- Establishes a long-term program to detect & monitor viruses with outbreak potential
- Creates an early alert system to **help coordinate public health responses**
- **Screens for:** SARS + Variants | Influenza A & B | RSV A & B | Monkeypox | Norovirus | Zika
Dengue | West Nile | Chikungunya | Polio | In Process: Measles & Enterovirus D68

Support for Rural Communities & Health Systems

In collaboration with the University of Texas El Paso, TEPHI has developed **regionally tailored resource guides for rural counties** in Texas highly impacted by COVID-19. These guides are a critical tool for rural communities, providing support with fundamental needs such as health care & food access. In addition, TEPHI has developed **training modules for small rural healthcare systems** to strengthen their capacity to respond to outbreaks.



Building a Sustainable Public Health Reserve Network



TEPHI is working to engage, train, & expand **a statewide network of public health reservists**. In pursuit of training this reserve network, TEPHI offers all Texas residents an online, no-cost **Certificate in Pandemic Preparedness** program. Additional in-person trainings have also been developed, geared towards Community Health Workers & Medical Reserve Corps volunteers, which emphasize engaging with & preparing their communities for future outbreaks.

Those looking for additional learning opportunities that highlight public health matters can also tune in to the "TEPHI Grand Rounds" webinar series. Topics have included monkey pox, public health law, vector-borne diseases, & more.

TEPHI Talks: Business-Centered Professional Development

The "TEPHI Talks" webinar series focus on preparing Texas businesses for future pandemics. These **business-to-business webinars** provide a space for Texas businesses to learn from industry leaders & are focused on **building resiliency & maintaining operations** when faced with a pandemic. These talks have featured leaders from key Texas businesses, including H-E-B, McKesson, & Dell Technologies.



Learn more, register for trainings, & find upcoming events @
tephi.texas.gov