

## FIFA World Cup Mass Gathering Clinical Awareness Update

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<b>DATE:</b>	6/10/2026
<b>TO:</b>	Health Alert Network
<b>FROM:</b>	Debra L. Bogen, MD, FAAP, Secretary of Health
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>FIFA World Cup Mass Gathering Clinical Awareness Update</b>
<b>DISTRIBUTION:</b>	Statewide
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Statewide
<b>STREET ADDRESS:</b>	n/a
<b>COUNTY:</b>	n/a
<b>MUNICIPALITY:</b>	n/a
<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	n/a

**This transmission is a “Health Alert”:** it conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

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### Summary

- The 2026 FIFA World Cup is occurring during June and July 2026 at host cities in Mexico, Canada, and the United States, including Philadelphia.
- These events carry increased risks for exposure to novel diseases or other threats, including terrorism and other mass casualty incidents.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is conducting enhanced disease surveillance during this event because increased travel and crowding may lead to additional reports of infectious disease among residents and visitors.
- Patients may present after travel with illnesses such as respiratory virus infections, norovirus, foodborne illness, or other communicable diseases.
- Clinicians should ask about attendance at FIFA games, Fan Fest, and related events when evaluating patients with fever, respiratory symptoms, vomiting, diarrhea, or other acute illness during this period.
- Providers are expected to report cases of enhanced high-priority public health conditions among out-of-state and international travelers to the Department of Health (DOH). Immediately report suspected outbreaks or unusual or infection with public health importance to local public health authorities or to DOH at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258).

## **Background**

The 2026 FIFA World Cup, taking place from June through July across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, including matches in Philadelphia, is expected to bring a substantial influx of domestic and international visitors to Pennsylvania. This raises the potential for higher volumes of reportable infectious diseases, including cases among out-of-state and international travelers. To support timely detection of cases and potential outbreaks, DOH has implemented enhanced disease surveillance in PA-NEDSS from June 1 through August 31, 2026, including the addition of a standardized question to capture FIFA World Cup–related exposures during disease investigations.

Providers should consider travel and event-associated illness in patients seen during the surveillance period, particularly those returning from Philadelphia or other FIFA World Cup venues. This is especially important in patients with respiratory complaints, gastrointestinal symptoms, or cluster-associated illness among household members, or travel companions.

## **Recommendations for Health Care Providers**

- When evaluating patients during the enhanced surveillance period, ask whether they attended a 2026 FIFA World Cup game or related event such as Fan Fest, and whether they stayed in shared lodging, or had close contact with others who were ill.
- Obtain a focused travel and exposure history, including event attendance, dates, venues, and overnight accommodations.
- Consider respiratory pathogen testing when clinically indicated, especially in patients with cough, fever, shortness of breath, or influenza-like illness, particularly if they may be traveling from areas with active respiratory virus circulation.
- Remain alert for other mass-gathering–associated conditions, including injuries or crowd-related trauma, alcohol- or drug-related emergencies, dehydration, heat-related illness, poor air quality, allergy exacerbations, vector exposures, and delayed access to care among international attendees.
- Consider the possibility of communicable disease spread among travelers, as well as non-endemic diseases due to the increase in international travel.
- Consider other threats that can occur during mass gatherings, including mass casualty incidents, terrorism, pandemic conditions, human trafficking, and overlapping public health emergencies.
- Consider stool testing, or outbreak evaluation, for patients with acute gastroenteritis when epidemiologically appropriate.
- Maintain standard infection prevention and control practices and use transmission-based precautions when indicated.
- Report suspected outbreaks, unusual clusters, or notifiable disease concerns to your local health department or DOH.
- Providers should pay particular attention to patients from southeastern Pennsylvania, including Philadelphia, Montgomery, Chester, Bucks, and Delaware Counties, where event-related exposure is more likely.

## **Additional Recommendation for All-Hazards Responses**

- Large scale public gatherings increase risk for mass casualty incidents, caused by a variety of threats, including chemical, radiological, biological, or explosives, and by crowd surges and pyrotechnic utilization, which can be common during large soccer events.
- Cyber threats against health care entities during special events are also a recognized threat.
- Consider reviewing the unique decontamination, or patient care requirements, that may be associated with these events and hazards, including applicable facility emergency response plans.
- Consider how your facility can receive and treat patients who would normally be served at specialty care facilities (e.g., trauma, burn), when those specialty sites are overwhelmed and transfer out of the impacted area is not immediately available.

- Recognize that during large-scale incidents, impacts on health care may be felt outside of the immediate area, as patients are transported to available care when local resources are overwhelmed. Other health care facilities, including urgent care, may become a place where individuals (especially international travelers who are less aware of health care delivery systems) seek care during these surges, and should be prepared to respond as appropriate. Healthcare facility staffing and logistics may also be impacted during larger scale incidents where normal transportation routes are impacted.
- Recognize that EMS and other patient transport resources may become overwhelmed during these mass casualty incidents, further changing normal patient care and transportation pathways. Recognize that during mass casualty incidents, emergency preparedness Health Care Coalitions may implement patient tracking efforts and regional coordination efforts to ensure effective response across the impacted area and across the health care delivery sector. Facilities are encouraged to work with their regional [Health Care Coalition](#) to ensure routine and emergency efforts around emergency preparedness are conducted.

### **Hospital and Laboratory Considerations**

Hospitals should ensure readiness for increased evaluation of a variety of illnesses during the event period.

Emergency departments, urgent care sites, and inpatient units should include questions about recent travel, known exposures to ill individuals, and mass gathering exposure during triage and intake assessments.

Clinical laboratories should be prepared for increased testing demand and should coordinate with infection prevention and public health partners when clusters or unusual organisms are identified. Facilities should also review specimen transport and reporting pathways to support timely public health response.

### **Public Counseling**

Providers should remind patients to stay home when ill, practice hand hygiene, and seek care promptly for severe symptoms such as dehydration, shortness of breath, persistent high fever, or signs of clinical deterioration. Patients attending crowded events should be advised to reduce exposure risks by following local venue and public health guidance. This information should be available to the public in multiple languages, especially with the increase in international travelers during these events.

### **Reporting and Questions**

Health care facilities using PA-NEDSS to report diseases and conditions should be aware of challenges with manual entry of out of state and international travelers. When entering the information into PA-NEDSS, the provider ZIP code should be used to report an out of state or international traveler in PA-NEDSS. The full patient information (address, home country), hotel where the travelers is staying while visiting, or current US residence should be added in the report notes section.

DOH reminds providers to report suspected outbreaks, unusual or infection with public health importance, or [immediately reportable conditions](#) to local public health authorities or to DOH at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258).

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This information is current as of June 10, 2026, but may be modified in the future.