

**Bull's-Eye Award Nomination: New York State Department of Health  
Online School Assessment Survey System**

**Background Description**

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Bureau of Immunization annually elicits mandated immunization survey data from more than 15,000 schools (post secondary institutions, public and non public schools, Head Start programs, nursery schools, Pre-k programs and day care centers) to ensure that all children/students in this state are appropriately immunized in accordance with Public Health Law (PHL) Section 2164 and 2165. Until recently the survey process was conducted exclusively by a labor intensive and time consuming process including the design, printing and mailing of paper survey forms to the schools and then collecting and processing all such forms. The data collected is used to monitor school compliance with existing immunization requirements, issue reports, and initiate and support a variety of immunization programs and activities. The manual assessment process is being rapidly scaled back by the highly secure, efficient and effective on line system known as the Online School Assessment Survey System (OSAS) which was created and developed by the Bureau of Immunization.

**Goal/major purpose**

The goal of the OSAS system is to quickly, accurately and securely collect immunization data to better monitor the compliance of colleges, schools and day care centers with public health laws mandating immunizations for school entry and attendance and to better identify those schools with low levels of immunization that may indicate the necessity of corrective intervention by the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization. The purpose of OSAS is to enhance the collection and analysis of assessment data and to broaden communications with schools via a communications directory and to provide them with access to the secure Health Provider Network (HPN) which provides members with important information including health alerts and notices of disease outbreaks such as H1N1 flu.

**Target population**

Colleges, public and non public schools and all types of day care operations and child caring agencies which are to required to comply with Sections 2164 and 2165 of the New York State Public Health Law.

**Annual budget and funding sources**

The federal immunization categorical grant provides the funding source for the project. NYSDOH employee time and the HCS network that houses the online survey application are in house costs.

**Timing**

Fourteen school districts that included 125 school buildings and 1 non public school in the Albany Capital District Area participated in the initial On-line School Assessment Survey when it was initiated in 2006. For the 2009 -10 school year, there are 4,624 schools that will be submitting online, a figure which includes all public schools that account for 85% of the 3,131,834 students in this state. The plan is to have over 9,000 schools submitting online in the next couple of years.

**Justification*****Innovation***

The OSAS project was conceived and created by the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization as a secure web based operation that enables colleges, schools and day care centers to submit, without cost, immunization survey data to the Bureau of Immunization from anywhere at any time with a minimum of effort.

The OSAS system checks the data that is entered for consistency and basic errors, thereby eliminating most frequent completion errors and instantly creating accurate reports. OSAS is conducted through the Health Provider Network (HPN) of the New York State Department of Health thereby enabling schools to submit school immunization data on-line, receive the latest NYS health alerts and up-dated information on timely health issues and to access the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS) registry to look up immunization records for

students attending their schools. OSAS also enables the schools to interact with other state agencies including the issuance of reports and response to surveys from those other agencies.

The principal obstacles to implementation of this project were to develop a major effective and comprehensive system from scratch. Once OSAS was developed a cohort of 15 public and private schools was assembled to test pilot the project. Once the system tested successfully it became necessary to recruit and train additional personnel to begin enrolling all schools and colleges in the system and provide them with ongoing support.

### **Effectiveness**

The project is achieving its goal of providing colleges, schools and day care operations in this state with an effective and free means of submitting immunization data to the NYSDOH and providing them with the benefit of having the capability to exchange information with other state agencies. The effectiveness of the project is validated by the fact that it has an established record of excellence and is being well accepted by schools and colleges throughout the state. Since its inception OSAS has not experienced any significant operational problems or difficulties.

The program is evaluated on a cost benefit basis. Last year the OSAS system provided savings of over \$21,000 as a result of reductions in printing, mailing and supply costs.

### **Potential for replication**

The program may be replicated by other immunization programs who may contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization for advice and technical assistance. Replicators may incur significant network costs if no in house network system is in place. The OSAS system was used as the basis for H1N1 surveillance system that asked schools to report absenteeism and number of cases of influenza-like illness. Since schools were already familiar with the system it worked well as the foundation for this system. In addition, the New York State Department of Health is using the system to request information from schools on BMI and obesity. OSAS has proven its innovative worth not only as the means to receive correct and complete immunization information, but it is

being used as a comprehensive system for communicating with and receiving information from schools statewide.

This fall, the Bureau of Immunization is moving to begin collecting all immunization on all students throughout the state each year. This effort is beginning by rolling this out with a few grades at a time each year. This could not be attempted with the on-line electronic system that has been developed.

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