



Profiles in Data Sharing

Data Sharing Working Group

Expanded Data Sharing to Enhance Contact Tracing in a Public Health Emergency

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has long assisted the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (HHS' CDC) in identifying persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease while traveling to the United States from abroad. DHS provides CDC with travelers' contact information so CDC can work with state, local, tribal, and territorial public health authorities to notify individuals about their potential exposure and provide guidance to protect their health and the community.

Amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, CDC identified gaps in available contact tracing data, which impeded domestic public health authorities' ability to notify travelers about their potential exposure.

To support CDC with additional contact information, DHS, with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), sought to supplement data holdings with other existing sources of contact information subject to legal and privacy limitations. To facilitate this disclosure of USCIS data to CDC, USCIS implemented a capability through which another DHS component could query and retrieve data authorized for sharing. USCIS processed and shared nearly 7,600 transactions per week with the CDC in early 2021.

To facilitate future data-sharing efforts, USCIS continues to migrate source system data to a data lake environment, so data are accessible, secure, and standardized for sharing. This migration creates a "single source of truth" for DHS, HHS, and other authorized mission partners.

Lessons Learned



Data sharing agreements should be scoped with future needs in mind: With the appropriate legal, privacy, policy, and technical safeguards, data sharing agreements should be developed to accommodate a variety of exigent circumstances that may arise in a particular mission space.



Use a consistent data sharing policy and process: By engaging with legal, privacy, policy, and technical experts early in the effort and following USCIS' data sharing policy and process, the team was able to overcome some of the challenges related to limited authorities and data governance processes.

Primary Stakeholders

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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