



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

2025

**EPIDEMIOLOGY AND LABORATORY
CAPACITY (ELC) WORKSHOP**

Office of the Chief State Epidemiologist

February 5th – 7th, 2025

Message from the DSHS Deputy State Epidemiologist

Welcome to the Texas 2025 Texas Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Workshop! We are excited to have you here

Welcome to the 2025 Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Workshop! The Texas ELC Workshop is an important forum to not only highlight your hard work and dedication as public health servants, but also to help enhance your (already incredible) skills. With the events of 2024, which included an unprecedented year for zoonotic conditions such as dengue and Oropouche, the ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1); in central and eastern Africa, outbreaks of Marburg and mpox Clade I, and the ongoing global outbreak of mpox Clade II, and as we begin 2025, our partnerships and collaboration are more important for the health of Texans than ever.

This year's ELC Workshop includes more than just skills training and updates. It is designed to help foster networking and professional relationships across the Texas public health community through interactive poster sessions, panels, and plenty of opportunities to connect.

Welcome, and thank you again for all that you do to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all Texans.



**Diana Martinez,
Deputy State Epidemiologist,
Texas Department of State Health Services**

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Thursday, February 6th, 2025 Plenary Sessions Summary

Time	Big' Tex Auditorium (350)
8:00	Registration & Check In 8:00-8:45
8:15	
8:30	
8:45	OCSE Opening - Dr. Martinez 8:45-9:15
9:00	
9:15	5 min Break 9:10-9:15
9:30	HAI - Antimicrobial Resistant Organisms in Texas: Current Data and Prevention Strategies 9:20-10:05
9:45	
10:00	
10:15	15 min Break 10:05-10:20
10:30	
10:45	Panel - Interactions w/Epi & Lab 10:50 - 11:45
11:00	
11:15	
11:30	Lunch Break 11:45-1:15 Network and Start looking at Poster Presentations
11:45	
1:00	
1:15	One Health Data and Trends for 2024 1:15-2:00
1:30	
1:45	Poster Presentations 2:00-2:30 [Atrium]
2:00	
2:15	15 min Break 2:30-2:45
2:30	
2:45	Short Presentations 2:45-3:25
3:00	
3:15	
3:30	5 min Break 3:20-3:25
3:45	Public Health Interviewing Skills Panel 3:30-4:10
4:00	
4:15	5 min Break 4:10-4:15
4:30	Office Hours/Informal Mixer [Atrium] 4:15-5:00
4:45	
5:00	

Thursday, February 6th, 2025 Plenary Sessions

8:45 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. Opening Plenary

Big Tex

Dr. Diana Martinez will open the 2025 Texas ELC Workshop with highlights of what you will see within the Workshop, remarks about your public health work for the betterment of Texas, and more.



*Diana Martinez, PhD
Deputy State
Epidemiologist
DSHS OSCE*

9:20 a.m. – 10:05 a.m. HAI – Antimicrobial Resistant Organisms in Texas: Current Data & Prevention Strategies

Big Tex

Healthcare-Associated Infection (HAI) epidemiologists will discuss antimicrobial resistance threats, explain the role of the Antimicrobial Resistance Laboratory Network (ARLN), and review public health strategies to prevent antimicrobial-resistant organism spread in healthcare facilities. Finally, a coordinated response between HAI epidemiologists and a local public health department to a *Candida auris* outbreak in a nursing home will be highlighted.



*Samantha Curtis, MPH
Epidemiologist III
Texas DSHS Healthcare
Safety Unit Region 1*



*Angel Guevara, MS, MPH,
CIC
HAI Epidemiologist
Texas DSHS Healthcare
Safety Unit Region 11*



*Anum Ali, RN, BSN
Infection Prevention
Nurse
Fort Bend Health &
Human Services*



*Kajal Amin, MPH, CIC
HAI Epidemiologist III
Texas DSHS Healthcare
Safety Unit PHR 6/5s*



*Kourtney Lopez, MPH, CIC
HAI Epidemiologist
Texas DSHS, Healthcare
Safety Unit Region 6/5s*

10:20 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Special Topics

Big Tex

Topics to be decided.

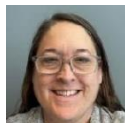
10:50 a.m. – 11:45 p.m. Panel: Interactions with Epi & Lab

Big Tex

This panel will host a group of Epidemiology and Public Health Laboratory experts to discuss the communication and close coordination between epidemiologists and lab staff across the Texas public health network. Panelists share insights and suggestions on coordinating between Epidemiology and Laboratory as part of Texas public health activity.



*Dr. Bethany Bolling, MS,
PhD
Manager, Zoonotic
Virology Group
Texas DSHS Public Health
Laboratory Division*



*Jan Owen, BS
Branch Manager
Texas DSHS
Mycobacteriology /
Mycology*



*Rashmi Tuladhar, PhD
Team Lead, Molecular
Biology Team
Texas DSHS Laboratory
Services Section*



*Kenny Davis, MPH
Manager III, Foodborne
and Waterborne Team,
High Consequence
Infectious Disease
Texas DSHS EAIDU*



*Kaitlin Driesse, PhD
Epidemiology Manager
Texas DSHS Regoin 6/5s*



*Brandon (Tyler) Collins,
MA
Epidemiologist
City of Midland Health
Department*

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. LUNCH BREAK

1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. **One Health Data and Zoonotic Trends 2024** **Big Tex**

This presentation is an overview of zoonotic disease trends and provides what types of animal laboratory data DSHS has access too for each disease. The goal is to provide a resource for health departments to know what laboratory testing is available and how we can work in a One Health environment with other state animal health agencies in the state for response and prevention for both animal populations and human health.



*Susan Rollo, MS, DVM, PhD DACVPM
State Public Health Veterinarian
Texas DSHS Zoonosis Control Branch*

2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. **Poster Presentations** **Atrium**

Poster authors will be available during this discussion and networking session to present their posters and answer questions. Posters will be available in the Atrium to review during the Workshop. See the Poster Presentations section for more details.

2:45 p.m. – 3:25 p.m. **Short Presentations** **Big Tex**

This session will feature a series of short presentations the highlight innovative epi analyses and important laboratory topics. Ms. Heather Mayfield will present about using data from the Texas Health Care Information Collection (THCIC) to evaluate and track emerging and infectious diseases, and provide two example epidemiologic studies that utilize these data. Ms. Cristi Palacios-Cross will present on demographic information in lab data and how it is influenced by the type of test (diagnostic versus surveillance). Ms. Kim Abella will present an overview of the Antimicrobial Resistance Lab Network.



*Heather Mayfield, MS
Team Lead, Advanced
Analytics Team
Texas DSHS center for
Health Statistics*



*Cristi Palacios-Cross
Microbiologist IV
Texas DSHS Quality
Assurance*



*Kimberly Abella
AR Lab Liaison, Education
Specialist
Texas DSHS Microbiology*

3:30 p.m. – 4:10 p.m. **Panel: Public Health Interviewing Skills** **Big Tex**

This panel will provide avenues for discussion about barriers and issues we often encounter while conducting public health interviews, and strategies that may successfully get around those barriers. Panelists will include experts from DSHS Regions and Local Health Departments who will share stories, tips, and tricks to conduct effective public health interviews and get past barriers.



*Kyle Kimmey, MS, CIC, CPH
Preparedness Epidemiologist
Texas DSHS Region 7*



*Kenny Davis, MPH
Manager III, Foodborne and Waterborne
Team, High Consequence Infectious Disease
Texas DSHS EAIDU*



*Whitney Tillman, MPH
Manager III, Vaccine Preventable Disease
Group
Texas DSHS EAIDU*



*Jael Miller
Zoonosis Control
Texas DSHS Region 6/5S*

4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **Office Hours/Informal Mixer** **Atrium**

Subject Matter Experts from teams within the Texas Department of State Health Services teams will be available during this discussion and networking session to answer your questions.

Thursday, February 6th, 2025 Poster Presentations

Candida auris Infection: Patient Characteristics and Risk Factors in San Antonio-Bexar County, TX area, 2023-2024

Katharine Perez Lockett, MPH; City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
Purnima Batter Epidemiologist, MPH; City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
Jose Ulloa Epidemiologist, MPH; City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
Dwayne Coleman, MPH; City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District

Stories from the Field: 10 Years of Mosquito Surveillance in Williamson County, Texas

Jason Fritz, MPH; Williamson County and Cities Health District

Heat-Related Syndromic Surveillance in South Texas: Assessing Regional Vulnerability to Extreme Heat

Yahia Al-Qudah, MBA; Texas Department of State Health Services
Barry Goldsmith; National Weather Service
Karime Sandoval, MPH; Texas Department of State Health Services

Primary Amebic Meningitis (PAM) in Central Texas

Elizabeth Hans, MPH; Texas Department of State Health Services Region 7
Costa Claver, MPH; Bell County Public Health
Megan Mackiewicz, MPH; Bell County Public Health

Understanding Adult Immunization Barriers in Liberty County, Texas - Public Health Region 6/5 South

Fancine Mascarenhas, MPH; Texas Department of State Health Services
Folake Olayinka, MPH; Texas Department of State Health Services

Data Visualization Dashboard: Profile of Tuberculosis (TB) in Dallas County

Cristina Lopez, MPH; Dallas County Health and Human Services
Robbie Bradfield, EMBA; Dallas County Health and Human Services
Saad Zaheer MD, MPH, MSPH, FACE; Dallas County Health and Human Services

Wound Botulism in Northeast Texas (July-August 2024): Case Review and Public Health Implications

Stephanie Williamson Epidemiologist III, CHES, CHW; Texas Department of State Health Services
Khadijah Davis; Texas Department of State Health Services

Total Eclipse in the Heart of Texas: Using CASPER to Assess Rural Community Preparedness

Conner Kelly, MPH, CPH, CIC; Texas Department of State Health Services

Listeria: A review on fetal loss related to international cheese products

Layda Rincon; Cameron County Public Health
Aaron Balderrama; Cameron County Public Health

Increase in foodborne illness complaints received using a web-based form, Austin, Texas, 2023-2024

Nicholas Paiano, MPH; Austin Public Health
Grisel Saenz, MPH; Austin Public Health
Vivienne Heines, MPH; Austin Public Health

Analysis of Vaccine Coverage in a Liberty County Pertussis Outbreak

Sarah May, MPH; Texas Department of State Health Services
Folake Olayinka, MPH; Texas Department of State Health Services
Amanda Wright, MPH; Texas Department of State Health Services
Melissa Plantenga; Texas Department of State Health Services
Kaitlin Driesse, PhD; Texas Department of State Health Services

Friday, February 7th, 2025 Breakout Sessions Summary

Time	Big Tex	Stadium	Bevo	Balcones	
8:00 8:05 8:10	Registration & Check In				
8:15 8:20 8:25					
8:30 8:35 8:40					
8:45 8:50 8:55	RSV Genomics	Zoonosis Case Investigation Tips & Tricks	Healthcare Associated Legionella	Foodborne / Waterborne Sessions	
9:00 9:05 9:10					
9:15 9:20 9:25	10 Min Break				
9:30 9:35 9:40	H5N1 Overview an Current Events	NEDSS Reports Training	Antibiotic Stewardship		
9:45 9:50 9:55					
10:00 10:05 10:10					
10:15 10:20 10:25	15 Min Break				
10:30 10:35 10:40	Potpourri Session	Wastewater Surveillance Panel	Lab Specimen Submission Guidelines		Data Analytics: Accessing NEDSS Data in SHARP
10:45 10:50 10:55					
11:00 11:05 11:10					
11:15 11:20 11:25	10 Min Break				
11:30 11:35 11:40	CLOSING PLENARY				
11:45 11:50 11:55					
12:00					

Friday, February 7th, 2025 Breakout Sessions

8:30 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. **Foodborne/Waterborne Sessions** **Balcones**

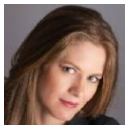
Campylobacteriosis and NEDSS Reporting: This presentation will provide an overview of Campylobacter surveillance and trends in Texas and focus on different aspects of laboratory reporting in NEDSS.

Enteric Outbreaks and National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS), Texas, 2024: We will cover the main components of NORS reporting and provide an overview of local enteric outbreaks by multiple variables that occurred in Texas in 2024 and were reported in NORS.

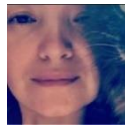
Multi-State Backyard Poultry (BYP) Salmonellosis Outbreak, 2024: This presentation will provide an overview and a nationwide perspective on a multi-state multi-serotype outbreak of Salmonella that occurred in 2024 and was associated with a backyard poultry (BYP) exposure. It will provide an understanding of the epidemiological response during a complex multi-jurisdictional investigation and will also cover the role and collaborative work between the epidemiology and BYP industry.

Cryptosporidium, Cholera & Vibriosis NEDSS Reporting, Texas **Healthy Birds, Safer Humans: Autogenous Vaccines Shaping the Future of Backyard Flocks**

Salmonellosis and NEDSS Reporting, Texas: Salmonella is one of the leading gastrointestinal illnesses in Texas, with damages estimated to reach billions of dollars annually in the USA. To provide epidemiologists with the most current information on Salmonella and help combat outbreaks, this presentation will cover the biology of Salmonella, its nomenclature, and how to interpret Salmonella lab reports.



Samantha Spencer, MPH
Epidemiologist II Foodborne & Waterborne Team
Texas DSHS EAIDU



Irina Cody, MPH



Kyle Kimmey, MS, CIC, CPH
Preparedness Epidemiologist
Texas DSHS Region 7



Gabriela Calvi, MPH, CHW
Epidemiologist I, Foodborne and Waterborne Team
Texas DSHS EAIDU

8:30 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. **RSV Genomics** **Big Tex**

This presentation provides an overview of the Texas SARS-CoV-2 Variant Surveillance Network, detailing its objectives, partnerships, and efforts in sample collection, sequencing, and variant characterization. Additionally, it highlights how the network serves as a foundation for genomic surveillance of other pathogens, with a focus on ongoing efforts to monitor respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), including laboratory method validation and next steps for expansion.



Blake Hanson, PhD
Assistant Professor
UTHealth Houston



Jeffery SoRelle, MD
UT Southwestern

8:30 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. **Zoonosis Case Investigation Tips & Tricks** **Stadium**

Central Office Zoonosis Control Branch Epidemiology team will present helpful background information and guidance for submitting complete and accurate zoonotic disease investigations for arboviral conditions (including West Nile virus and dengue virus) as well as Lyme disease.



Kelly Broussard, MPH
Epidemiologist IV & ArboNET Coordinator
Texas DSHS Zoonosis Control Branch



Kamesha Owens, MPH
Epidemiologist II
Texas DSHS Zoonosis Control Branch



Bonny Mayes, MA, E-RYT 200
Epidemiologist III
Texas DSHS Zoonosis Control Branch

8:30 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. Healthcare Associated Legionella Bevo

Legionnaires' Disease in Texas: Risks and Prevention: This presentation will discuss the ongoing Legionellosis trends seen in Texas as well as some important prevention methods to think about when completing HAI investigations.

HAI Legionella Investigation Process Review and Tips: A review of the healthcare-associated legionella investigation process and best practices to enhance your partnership with healthcare facilities.



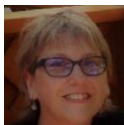
*Olivia Smith, PhD, MPH
Epidemiologist III Invasive Respiratory
Disease Team
Texas DSHS EAIDU*



*Christina Carmona, MPH, CHES
Epidemiology Program Manager
City of San Antonio, Metropolitan Health
District*

9:30 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. H5N1 Overview and Current Events Big Tex

This session will feature experts in the H5N1 response presenting on some of their work. Dr. Annajane Marlar will provide a summary of H5N1 investigations in dairies in Texas Public Health Region 2/3. Dr. Chloe Stenkamp-Strahm will present on the work of her group in Colorado State University on H5N1. And Dr. Sara Wyckoff will present on Surveillance for H5N1 in migratory birds and other wild animals in Texas.



*Aj Marlar DVM, MRCVS,
DACVO
Manager
Texas DSHS Public Health
Region 2/3 Zoonosis
Control*



*Chloe Stenkamp-Strahm,
DVM, PhD
College of Veterinary
Medicine and Biomedical
Sciences,*



*Sara Wyckoff, DVM
Wildlife Veterinarian
Texas Parks and Wildlife
Department*

9:30 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. NEDSS Reports Training Stadium

This training will focus on the NEDSS Reporting System and include descriptions of how to process reports as well as tips & tricks.



*Sepehr Arshadmansab, MPH
Health Informatics Specialist
Texas DSHS Office of Public Health Data
Strategy and Modernization*

9:30 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. Antibiotic Stewardship Bevo

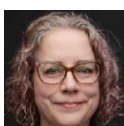
Participants in this presentation should be able to understand and describe the what and why of antimicrobial stewardship (AS), recall the seven core concepts in the implementation of AS in health care facilities, explain antibiogram interpretation for better antimicrobial use in the community and facilities, and identify how local health departments can advocate and promote AS in their jurisdictions and collaborate with HC facilities.



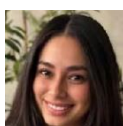
*Dr. Rama Thyagarajan, MD, MPH, FIDSA, CIC
Associate Professor, Department of Internal
Medicine; Infection Control and Prevention &
Antimicrobial Stewardship
Dell Seton Medical Center*

10:35 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Lab Specimen Submission Guidelines Bevo

Successfully Submitting Specimens to DSHS Austin Laboratory. A guide to submitting testable specimens and avoiding the most common reasons for testing delays or rejection.



*Niamh Gray
Education Specialist
Texas DSHS Public Health Laboratory
Division*



*Eliza Villareal
Laboratory Courier Coordinator
Texas DSHS Public Health Laboratory
Division*

10:35 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Potpourri Session

Big Tex

This session will feature experts in their field with short presentations that narrow in on specific topics. Dr. Fernanda Santos will present on an Mpox case report in a child. Dr. Anabel Rodriguez will present on occupational health among Spanish and Indigenous-speaking agricultural populations. Dr. Kaitlin Driesse will present on the Public Health Region 6/5S response to rubella cases. Ms. Summer Mitchell will present on a vaccine awareness pamphlet developed in Abilene Public Health.



*Fernanda Santos, MD, MPH
Senior Epidemiologist
City of Austin, Austin Public Health*



*Summer Mitchell, PhD, MSHS, MHA
Epidemiologist
Abilene-Taylor County Public Health District*



*Kaitlin Driesse, PhD
Epidemiology Manager
Texas DSHS Region 6/5s*



*Anabel Rodriguez, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor Environmental and
Occupational Health
Texas A&M University School of Public
Health*

10:35 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Data Analytics: Accessing NEDSS Data in SHARP Balcones

A data warehouse and associated data visualization tools, collectively called the State Health Analytics & Reporting Platform (SHARP), are being made available to DSHS Regions and Local Health Departments to assist in visualizing and assessing NEDSS data. SHARP brings many capabilities to epidemiologists across Texas and is available to access with most of your favorite software for processing data. This presentation will demonstrate ways of accessing data within SHARP for a variety of software including Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Power BI Desktop, SAS Desktop, SAS Viya, Tableau, ArcGIS Pro Desktop, R, and Snowflake Snowsight.



*Jeff Swanson, PhD
Medical Research Specialist
Texas DSHS Disease Surveillance and
Epidemiology*

10:35 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Panel: Wastewater Surveillance

Stadium

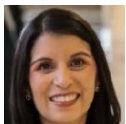
Panelists will provide information on Wastewater Surveillance Programs around Texas, their purposes, and how they are implemented. Panelists are experts from DSHS Regions and Local Health Departments in implementing wastewater surveillance systems, as well as establishing the partnerships and collaboration needed to do so.



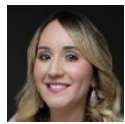
*Layla Lustri, MPH
Epidemiologist III
Texas DSS Wastewater Epidemiology &
Surveillance Program*



*Bonnie Oh, PhD
NGS Research and Testing Group Manager
Texas DSHS Public Health Laboratory
Division*



*Tiffany Torres, MPH, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}, CIC
Epidemiology/Disease
Surveillance/Laboratory Manager
Lubbock Public Health*

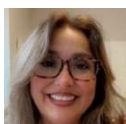


*Amelia Solis, MPH, MS, CPH, CHW
Epidemiology Administrator
City of Laredo Public Health Department*

11:30 a.m. Closing Plenary

Big Tex

Annette Rodriguez, Director of the Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit, will provide closing remarks reflecting on activities during the 2025 Texas ELC Workshop and Texas public health work going forward.



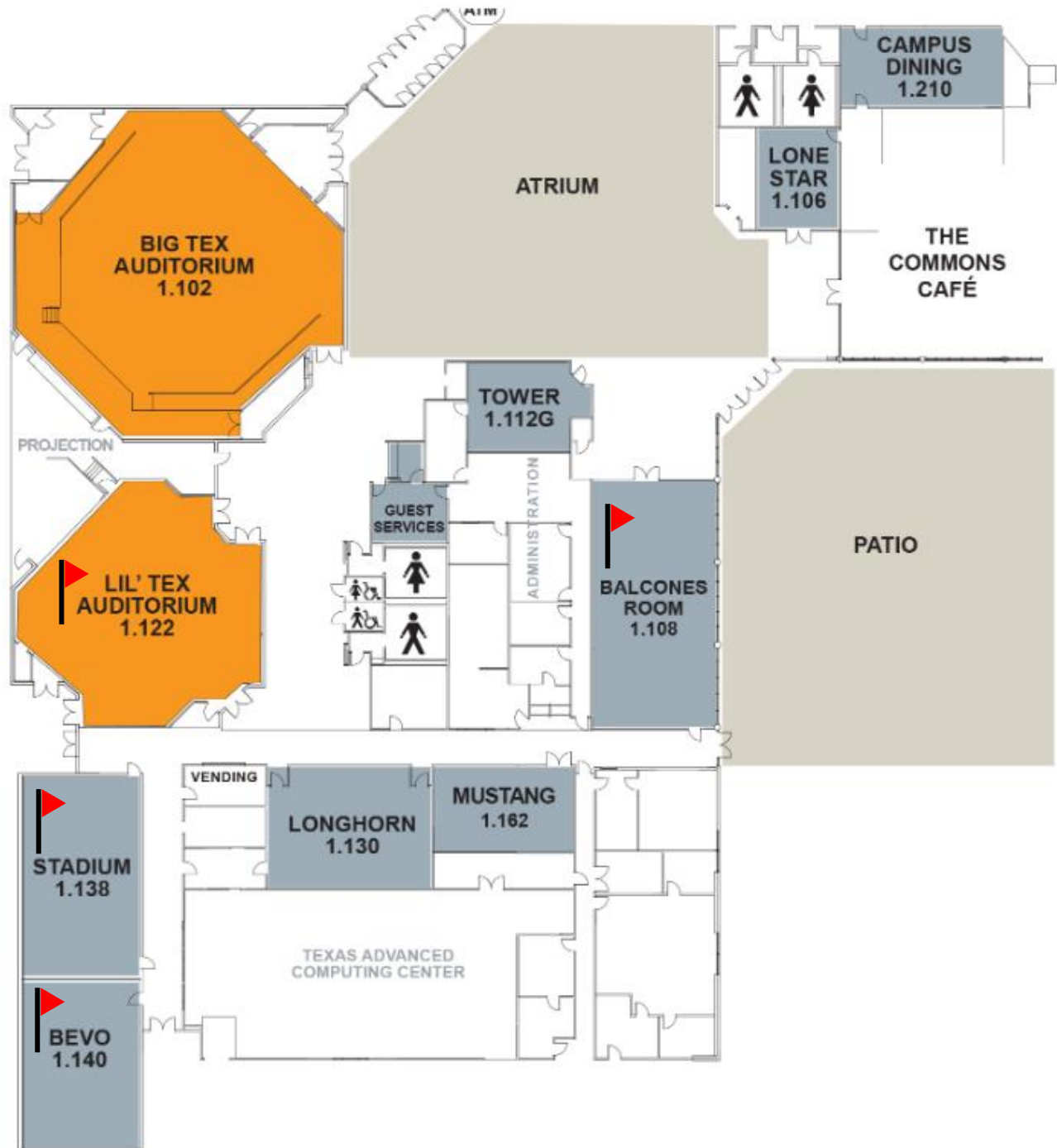
*Annette Rodriguez, MPH
Director III
Texas DSHS Emerging and Acute Infectious
Disease Unit*

Venue & Parking

The Commons Conference Center is located in the J. J. Pickle Research Center at 2901 Read Granberry Trail, Austin, TX 78758. Visitor parking can be found in the parking lots to the north, west, and east of the Commons building. ADA accessible spaces are located on the west and north sides of the building. Visitors using these parking lots will need to print and display a parking permit where it is visible on their dashboard.

Food and drink can be purchased on-site at the Commons Café which operates from 7:30 am – 2 pm daily.

Further information about the Commons can be found online at <https://commons.utexas.edu/>.



Thank you for attending the 2025 Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Workshop!

Please consider taking a few minutes to complete our evaluation survey so we can continue to improve on this conference.



DSHS General Information

Vision

- ★ Protecting the health of Texans

Values

- ★ Ensure effective use of resources
- ★ Collaborate with our partners
- ★ Serve the public with compassion and respect
- ★ Empower a dedicated and diverse workforce
- ★ Lead with integrity and empathy
- ★ Strive for excellence

Mission

- ★ Improving health outcomes of all Texans by providing essential laboratory services and using proven strategies to control emerging and ongoing infectious disease threats.



TEXAS

Health and Human Services

**Texas Department of State
Health Services**

Contact Information

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