Infectious disease outbreaks often occur simultaneously on both sides of the U.S.-México border. As an example, identical viral strains related to the onset of the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 influenza seasons were detected during the same two-week period under the Border Influenza Surveillance Network operated by the New Mexico Department of Health, Chihuahua State Health Services, and Texas Department of State Health Services in the Paso del Norte Region. The Network also simultaneously detected the Novel H1N1 Influenza-A outbreak in late April 2009.

Due to the current disparities in geographic outreach, protocols, and sustained financial support, surveillance systems in U.S. border states and those in México are not coordinated and cannot serve the objectives of early warning and responses to such outbreaks. Current guidelines in México do not permit real-time communication of important and timely epidemiological data concerning emerging diseases that can affect border residents. To facilitate these communications, binational surveillance and communication protocols are under review by the United States and México federal health authorities.

To respond to these challenges, the following actions are proposed:

• Approve the Guidelines for U.S.-México Coordination on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest which will facilitate establishment of common systems and information platforms to share data in real time on notifiable conditions at the sister-state and sister-city levels. These guidelines may provide a model for future trilateral collaboration.

• Continue support of the U.S. border states Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS) and the EWIDS México projects and increase coordination with the Border Infectious Disease Surveillance (BIDS) project, both of which have been used as a basis to support binational epidemiological surveillance among state and local public health authorities in the border region.

• Promote the replication and maintenance of the U.S.-border states EWIDS and BIDS joint support for a binational influenza surveillance network. The network would encompass influenza-like illnesses (ILIs) and severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) symptoms, building on the foundation of current efforts in the New Mexico-Chihuahua-West Texas and California-Baja California sister-state sub-regions.

• Strengthen existing channels of communication between the BHC and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) for the purpose of reinforcing preparedness and response collaboration along the U.S.-México border.