

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is E-PLUS?

The Emergency Patient Look-Up System, or E-PLUS, is a cloud-based software solution designed to support public health, emergency management authorities, and other entities during disaster response.

There are three applications within E-PLUS:

- Patient Search: Access electronic patient clinical records and medication fill histories from national health information exchange networks
- Emergency Census: Special Needs Shelter (SpNS) registration data is used to search for missing persons and support provider alerting
- Missing Persons: Search 800+ connected healthcare facilities within Florida and Emergency Census registration data to locate missing individuals

### 2. If I am a credentialed user of E-PLUS, will I have access to all three applications?

No, E-PLUS is designed to be flexible to fit different types of organizations' needs. Users within organizations can request access to one, two, or all three applications of E-PLUS. Access to one application is not contingent on access to another application nor are all users within an organization required to have access to the same applications. Users are vetted and credentialed based on the user's role in emergency response.

### 3. Is E-PLUS available for daily use?

No, E-PLUS is only activated at the onset of a declared disaster upon issuance of an "emergency declaration". Upon activation, users are notified of system availability.

### 4. Who can use E-PLUS?

E-PLUS is designed to support Public Health authorities, Emergency Response Organizations, Law Enforcement, Health Systems, and Home Health agencies. There is ongoing identification of additional use cases and potential users.

### 5. What types of emergencies will trigger activation of E-PLUS?

E-PLUS is activated once an emergency declaration has been issued at the state or federal level. Since 2021, E-PLUS has been activated for the Surfside Condo Collapse, Tropical Storm Elsa, the Panhandle wildfires, and recent Hurricanes Idalia and Ian. In early 2024, E-PLUS was activated for the North Florida Tornado event.

### 6. Where does the information come from in E-PLUS?

Clinical documents are retrieved from the eHealth Exchange and medication fill histories are provided through Surescripts. The data used to locate missing persons is retrieved through the Florida HIE's Encounter Notification Service (ENS). ENS receives patient encounter data or admit, discharge, and transfer (ADT) messages from over 800 health care facilities throughout the state which report to ENS. In addition, Special Need Shelter (SpNS) registration data is used when locating missing individuals (see #7). A detailed list of data sources supporting Patient Search and Missing Persons can be found [HERE](#).

7. **If I am using the state Registry to conduct intake into a Special Needs Shelter (SpNS), how is this information shared with E-PLUS?**

The Agency, the Division of Emergency Management, and the Department of Health (DOH) have entered into a data sharing agreement under which shelter registration (intake and discharge) information collected through the State Registry is transferred to the Agency and subsequently loaded into the Emergency Census application within E-PLUS. Information provided through Emergency Census is used as a data source to the Encounter Notification Service to support care coordination during disasters and expand Missing Persons search capabilities.

If you are using an alternative system for intake and would like to share data with E-PLUS, please contact program staff at [E-PLUS@ahca.myflorida.com](mailto:E-PLUS@ahca.myflorida.com).

8. **What privacy and security standards are in place for E-PLUS?**

E-PLUS handles data privacy and security in several ways. First, the vendor which operates E-PLUS is HITRUST CSF certified. The HITRUST common security framework (CSF) leverages standards from authoritative sources (such as HIPAA) to provide an objective, measurable way to manage the security risks that come with handling healthcare information and other sensitive data. Second, access to E-PLUS is vetted by AHCA (or a designated individual/organization) and all users are subject to the terms of use, flow-down agreements, and federal, state, and local laws. Third, access to E-PLUS is roles-based, meaning a user is credentialed access to an application(s) based on their emergency response role.

9. **How can the data obtained through E-PLUS be utilized?**

Access to E-PLUS is authorized under HIPAA permitted purposes, including:

- Treatment of an individual
- For public health activities and reporting as permitted by law
- For uses and disclosures in connection with a “serious and imminent” threat to the health or safety of a person or the public.

Patients typically consent to having their data shared at the point of care. This consent can be withdrawn and if so, E-PLUS will not be able to retrieve documents or medications for individuals who have opted out of data sharing

10. **What type of patient information is needed to use E-PLUS?**

There are defined data elements required for each application, however, for Missing Persons and Patient Search, the more patient demographics that can be provided, the greater the probability of returning a patient match.

- **Missing Persons:** Within the Missing Persons application there is a downloadable, properly formatted .CSV template with the required demographic fields listed (Name, DOB, etc). All demographic fields do not have to be completed to perform a search; however, E-PLUS will inform you if there are not enough demographics to search for the missing persons. Additionally, the first



and last name fields cannot be left blank. Regardless of the completeness of the rest of the demographic fields, E-PLUS will reject records without a first and last name. The demographic fields in the template include: first name, middle name, last name, DOB, gender, address including street, city, state, and zip; phone number; SSN; and insurance ID. Additional information on required demographics and acceptable combinations of completed demographic fields can be found in the Missing Persons Manual.

- Patient Search: Demographic fields marked with an asterisk are required to perform a search. Required fields include: first name, last name, DOB, and gender. However, obtain as much information as you can and enter it into E-PLUS to improve the probability of returning a patient match. Additional demographic fields include city, state, zip code, and phone number.

#### 11. What software is required to use E-PLUS?

E-PLUS is a web-based platform that can be used anywhere that has an internet connection. For best performance, it is recommended to use the latest version of Chrome or Edge browsers.

#### 12. How do I contact E-PLUS program staff for questions or if I am interested in onboarding?

Individuals and organizations interested in exploring how E-PLUS can support their organization's emergency response operations, can reach out to [E-PLUS@ahca.myflorida.com](mailto:E-PLUS@ahca.myflorida.com).

