

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 through the Florida HIE Encounter Notification Service (ENS).
- **Missing Persons:** Search 800+ connected healthcare facilities within Florida and Emergency Census registration data to locate missing individuals

For best performance, it is recommended to use the latest version of Chrome or Edge browsers.

2. 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. The Agency is continually working with potential users to identify additional use cases and encourage individuals to reach out to discuss how E-PLUS could support disaster support efforts.

3. 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. 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.

4. 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 via email and are kept informed of any issues throughout system activation. E-PLUS staff continually monitors use during an activation and will reach out to individual users if problems are identified.

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 numerous events and most recently Hurricanes Debbie, Helene and Milton.



6. What data sources are used to support E-PLUS?

Patient Search functionality is supported through connectivity to the eHealth Exchange. The eHealth Exchange connects healthcare providers, regional and state health information exchanges, public health authorities, and federal agencies to facilitate the exchange of medical data, supporting over 250 million patients at a national level. Additionally, patient medication fill histories are provided through a connection to the national exchange network, Surescripts. Surescripts provides medication fill histories from those pharmacies that have opted into E-PLUS participation.

The Missing Persons application is supported through E-PLUS's connection to the Florida HIE's Encounter Notification Service (ENS). ENS routes admit, discharge, and transfer (ADT) messages to connected health care facilities. In addition, census data from State Special Needs Shelters contribute encounter data.

7. What algorithm is used by E-PLUS to query for clinical documents?

Beginning in 2025, E-PLUS will use a geospatial algorithm based on the patient's and querying facility's zip code in returning clinical documents. For those that may be visiting the State (e.g. snowbirds) users can use the patient's home zip code or perform two queries using both the patient's home zip code and the Florida based zip code.

This change does not impact medication queries that are sent to Surescripts via E-PLUS.

8. 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 Special Needs Registry (SNR) 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.

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

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. Additionally, 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. Lastly, access to E-PLUS is roles-based, meaning a user is credentialed access to an application(s) based on their emergency response role.



10. How can the data provided 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.

11. 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.).
 - Additional information on required demographics and acceptable combinations of completed demographic fields can be found in the Missing Persons Manual.
- Patient Search: The demographic fields marked with an asterisk (first name, last name, DOB, and gender) are required to perform a search through the national networks.
 - Additional patient information of zip, phone number, and address increases the probability of patient matching and return of clinical documents.

12. What can I do to ensure the best results in returning clinical records?

User experience has demonstrated that the more patient demographics that are entered increases the probability of a patient match resulting in additional clinical information. Demographics that are patient specific such as phone, zip code and address are most likely to return results. It is recommended that the patient information that is available in the Special Needs Registry can be used to obtain additional information if not available from the patient.

13. 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.

