



*Sedgwick County...  
working for you*

## *FirstWatch*

### *What is FirstWatch™?*

FirstWatch™ is an early warning biosurveillance system designed to monitor the 9-1-1 and other public safety systems for abnormalities that may indicate a biological attack or other significant medical trends.

### *Is FirstWatch™ only for bioterrorism?*

FirstWatch™ has several components that make it useful for other symptomatic diseases as well. For instance, FirstWatch™ will be instrumental in early detection of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), West Nile Virus, and seasonal diseases like the flu. We can also identify other epidemiological and public safety trends such as the impact of weather systems.

### *Does FirstWatch™ only monitor Sedgwick County?*

No, FirstWatch™ is currently deployed in close to 80 metro areas across the US and Canada. Further, it is designed to be a collaborative online tool that could allow Sedgwick County to share data with other local, state and federal agencies as part of a regional, statewide or national real-time bioterrorism or health surveillance system. Other users in our region include: Johnson County; Kansas City; Columbia/Boone County (Missouri); Independence, Missouri; Oklahoma City; Tulsa, OK; Des Moines and Davenport, IA.

### *How Does FirstWatch™ know that there is a problem?*

FirstWatch™ scans the 9-1-1 and other public safety systems for symptoms of bioterrorism (such as nausea, vomiting, fever, skin rash and coma). FirstWatch™ then compares historical data to real time events to determine if a disease outbreak is occurring and warrants an investigation by the Health Department.

### *Who responds to FirstWatch™ alerts?*

The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) at the Sedgwick County Health Department is tasked with maintaining and responding to FirstWatch™ alerts. In the event of an alert, FirstWatch™ will notify the Health Department to determine the extent of the alert.

### *What should I do in the event of an alert?*

In most cases, a FirstWatch™ alert is nothing more than an indication of increased sickness symptoms resulting from diseases like the flu or West Nile Virus. In the event of a disease outbreak or bioterrorist attack, Sedgwick County will notify the public through the local media. To prepare for emergencies, please familiarize yourself with the Neighborhood Distribution Centers located in your community. You can find those locations in the community services section of the Feist and Southwestern Bell telephone directories and on the Sedgwick County Health Department's website [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org).

### *For more information*

Visit the  
Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS)  
Web page at [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org)  
or call 660-5551.