

Laboratory Systems and Standards

Public health laboratories are constantly charged with maintaining a high level of quality testing. The day-to-day challenges of doing more with less give APHL and public health laboratories the opportunity to find innovative solutions for improvement activities, which involves developing partnerships and maintaining networks.

CDC funds APHL to promote the development and adoption of quality laboratory practices and provides opportunities to strengthen public health laboratory systems.

Future efforts will continue to focus on creating tools and resources to assist public health laboratories in identifying areas that need strengthening, developing quality improvement efforts and networking with partners.

In order to strengthen the public health laboratory system, APHL works to:

- Promote assessment using a performance standards tool that leads to the implementation of a quality system improvement process within state public health laboratory systems.
- Participate in the Healthy People 2020 initiative by capturing and submitting data related to comprehensive laboratory services.
- Develop a cost accounting tool for public health laboratories.
- Assist public health laboratories in meeting and maintaining the CLIA regulations to ensure high quality laboratory testing within public health laboratories nationwide.
- Develop laboratory standards to be utilized in the voluntary accreditation program for state public health laboratories.
- Provide opportunities and support for laboratory-specific improvement activities.

Ultimately, these activities will support the improvement of public health laboratory practice.

Other specific activities this year included:

- Supporting of five Laboratory System Improvement Program (L-SIP) assessments, including the first reassessment and first local laboratory system assessment.
- Revising and updating the L-SIP assessment tool.
- Updating and distribution of the Core Functions and Capabilities of State Public Health Laboratories document.
- Launching of the laboratory test cost accounting tool.
- Collaborating with the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) on including standards more relevant for the public health laboratories.
- Conducting focus groups with laboratorians on the perceived value of proficiency testing beyond meeting regulatory requirements.

Links:

- http://www.aphl.org/AboutAPHL/publications/Documents/COM_2010_CoreFunctionsPHLs.pdf
- http://www.aphl.org/aphlprograms/Iss/projects/performance/Documents/Definition_of_a_state_public_health_laboratory_system_June2010.pdf

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