

The Yardstick: It's More Than Just Three Feet...

**Tim Monson, M.S., on behalf of APHL and the
Yardstick Task Force**

2014 APHL Annual Meeting

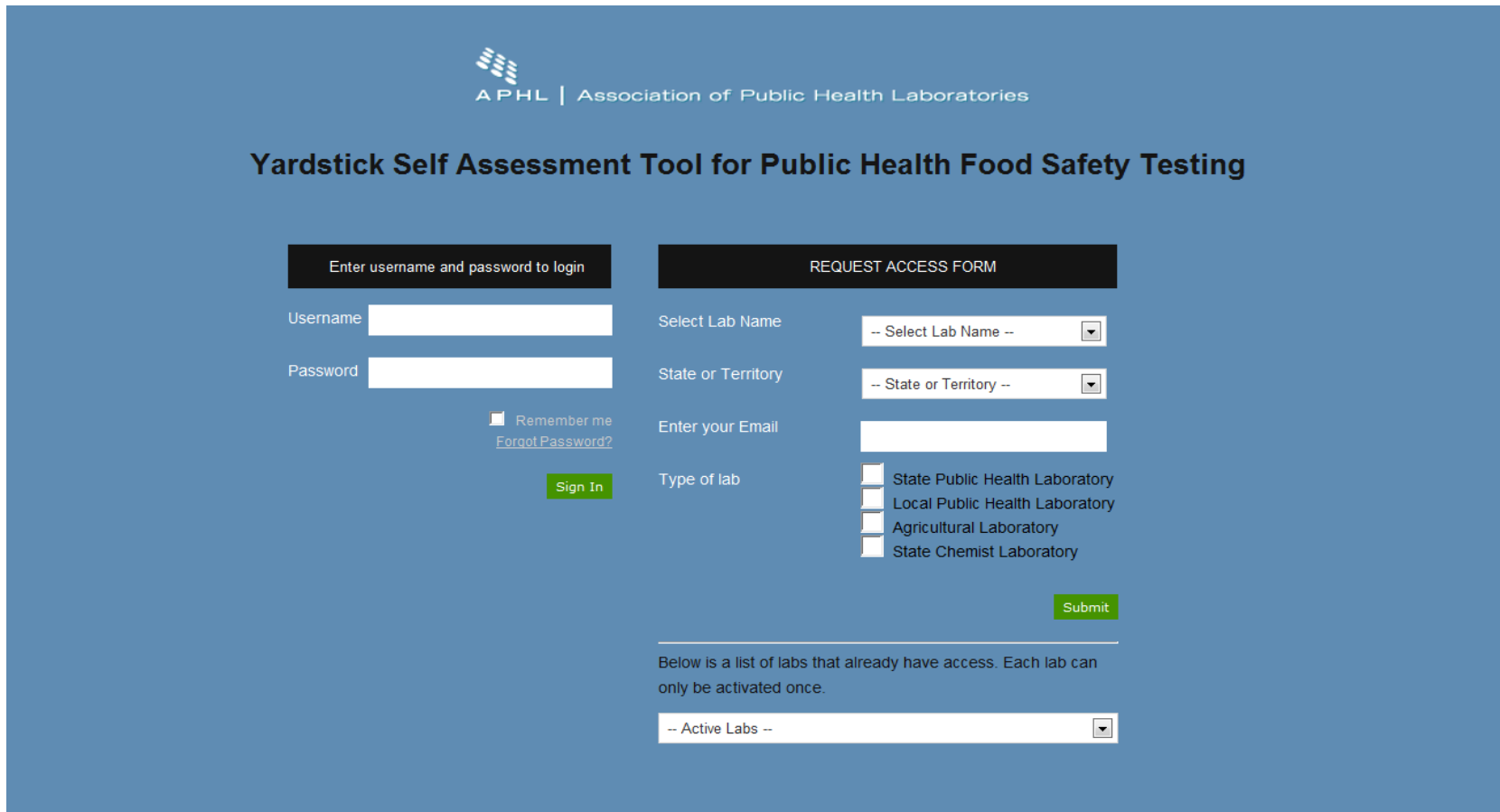
June 3, 2014

Do you know what this is and for what purpose it is used?



Google Images

Do you know what this is and for what purpose it is used?



The screenshot shows a web interface for the APHL Yardstick Self Assessment Tool. It features a dark blue header with the APHL logo and name. Below the header, the title 'Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing' is displayed. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is for login, with a black header 'Enter username and password to login'. It contains input fields for 'Username' and 'Password', a 'Remember me' checkbox, a 'Forgot Password?' link, and a green 'Sign In' button. The right column is for requesting access, with a black header 'REQUEST ACCESS FORM'. It contains dropdown menus for 'Select Lab Name' and 'State or Territory', an 'Enter your Email' input field, a 'Type of lab' section with four radio button options (State Public Health Laboratory, Local Public Health Laboratory, Agricultural Laboratory, and State Chemist Laboratory), and a green 'Submit' button. Below the form, there is a text block stating 'Below is a list of labs that already have access. Each lab can only be activated once.' followed by a dropdown menu labeled '-- Active Labs --'.

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Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Enter username and password to login

Username

Password

Remember me
[Forgot Password?](#)

Sign In

REQUEST ACCESS FORM

Select Lab Name

State or Territory

Enter your Email

Type of lab

- State Public Health Laboratory
- Local Public Health Laboratory
- Agricultural Laboratory
- State Chemist Laboratory

Submit

Below is a list of labs that already have access. Each lab can only be activated once.

2013 APHL Annual Meeting



The Yardstick: It's More Than Just Three Feet...It's a Comprehensive, Web-Based Food Safety Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Laboratories and Their Food Safety Systems

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"YARDSTICK"

Yardstick (noun) – a test or standard used in measurement, comparison or judgment

How does your laboratory and food safety system's foodborne illness testing measure up?

ABSTRACT (Updated)

PURPOSE: The Yardstick Self-Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing is intended to serve as a "gold standard", or "Yardstick", that clinical, environmental and agricultural public health laboratories (PHL) can use to measure the overall capability, capacity and effectiveness of their food safety (FS) systems.

TOOL DESIGN: Under the auspices of the Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR), APHL convened FS subject matter experts in the clinical, agricultural and environmental laboratory fields to develop a comprehensive FS self-assessment tool. Areas assessed within the tool include laboratory testing, data management, communication and coordination with partners and administration organization. The format of the Yardstick self-assessment tool is multi-faceted, outlining best practices for all categories and areas (foodborne pathogens, chemicals, toxins and radiators) of foodborne illness testing. Best practice recommendations and their accompanying assessment questions are weighted to allow users to prioritize laboratory or system gaps. Questions were compared with other public health and FS publications, surveys and guidelines that measure FS system effectiveness to ensure for consistency. PHLs are encouraged to engage all laboratory partners within their jurisdiction that are performing FS testing when completing the tool in order to obtain the most comprehensive assessment of their entire FS system.

INTENDED OUTCOME: All PHLs that use the Yardstick tool will gain a better understanding of potential gaps within their FS systems and be able to both prioritize areas for improvement and compare their FS system capabilities and capacity to those of their peers.

YARDSTICK TOOL WORK GROUP

- John Fontana- Connecticut Dr. Katherine A. Kelley State Public Health Laboratory (formerly Massachusetts William A. Hinton State Laboratory)
- Heather Green- (formerly APHL Food Safety)
- Bill Ann Jun- Minnesota Public Health Laboratory
- Sun Kim- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Kirsten Larson- APHL Senior Specialist, Food Safety
- Tim Monson- Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene
- Shari Shea- APHL Director of Food Safety
- Lori Smith- Utah Unified State Laboratories: Public Health
- Michael Smith- (formerly APHL Food Safety)
- Denise Toney- Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services
- Victor Waddell- Arizona Bureau of State Laboratory Services
- Delores Willis- Maryland Public Health Laboratory

YARDSTICK TOOL SECTIONS

- Introduction
- Table of Contents
- Laboratory Testing
- Data Management
- Communications and Coordination With Partners
- Administration Organization
- Glossary of Terms

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WEB-BASED TOOL DEVELOPMENT

APHL contracted with Mind & Media, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia, specializing in communications strategy and execution, to develop the web-based assessment tool. The following three figures offer examples of the Yardstick Self-Assessment Tool's functionality.

Figure 1: Yardstick Menu Page



Figure 2: Example Question



Figure 3: Results Example



YARDSTICK TOOL PROCESS

- Visit the APHL Food Safety website at: www.aphl.org/aphlprograms/food
- Choose "Yardstick Self-Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing" and request a password
- Log in and complete the assessment as a food safety system; may need to partner with other laboratories in your system to answer all the questions
- Complete the entire assessment at one time or save your responses and revisit as time allows
- Submit responses to APHL when completed
- Responses to the assessment questions will be presented to users with accompanying recommended practices and will be presented by level of priority
- Results remain private; visible only to your laboratory and APHL
- Compare your laboratory capacity, capability and effectiveness to others using de-identified aggregate data compiled and collated within the tool
- The Yardstick assessment tool will be revisited and updated as needed by FS subject matter experts

Acknowledgements / Sources

- The authors would like to thank and acknowledge the following contributors to the development of the Yardstick Self-Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing:
 - Association of Public Health Laboratories, Food Safety Committee
 - Dea Heggstad, University of Minnesota, School of Public Health
 - Denise Toney, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health
 - Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR)
 - Chris Aronson and the development staff at Mind & Media, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia

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Objectives

- Understanding of what the Yardstick tool will assess
- Know who within your public health system should be utilizing the tool
- See the Yardstick tool end-product and what your public health system can do with the tool results
- Know what you can expect in the future for the Yardstick self-assessment tool

Yardstick Self-Assessment Tool

- Comprehensive, web-based self assessment tool for your PH food safety system
- Many PHLs will need to collaborate with food safety testing partners in order to complete parts of the tool
- Question responses will be confidential; only APHL Food Safety staff designated as administrators will be able to see system-specific results

Yardstick Self-Assessment Tool

- Sections:
 - Introduction
 - Table of Contents
 - Laboratory Testing
 - Data Management
 - Communications and Coordination with Partners
 - Administration Organization
 - Glossary of Terms

What Does the Tool Assess?

- The Yardstick self-assessment tool will assess four main areas of your PH food safety system:
 - Laboratory Testing
 - Data Management
 - Communication and Coordination with Partners
 - Administration Organization
- Within each area are question groups that relate to that particular area

Yardstick Login Page



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Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Enter username and password to login

Username

Password

Remember me
[Forgot Password?](#)

REQUEST ACCESS FORM

Select Lab Name

State or Territory

Enter your Email

Type of lab

- State Public Health Laboratory
- Local Public Health Laboratory
- Agricultural Laboratory
- State Chemist Laboratory

Below is a list of labs that already have access. Each lab can only be activated once.

Yardstick Tool Home Page

User: [timothy.monson@slh.wisc.edu](#) [Change Password](#) [LogOut](#)



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[Home](#) >

Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Choose any single group of questions:

[Laboratory Testing](#)

[Data Management](#)

[Communication and Coordination with Partners](#)

[Administration Organization](#)

[Individual Report](#)

[Aggregate Report](#)

First time here?

[Read instructions for using the tool and reviewing reports](#)

Need help?

[Contact APHL with questions or comments.](#)

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Yardstick Tool - Laboratory Testing



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Home > [Laboratory Testing](#)

Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Choose any single group of questions:

Question Groups:

Date Completed

Collection, Submission, and Storage of Specimens/Samples

no past results

Verification/Validation/Capability Studies

no past results

Analytical Issues and Recommended Test Capabilities

no past results

PulseNet Activities

no past results

Individual Report

Aggregate Report

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APHL ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES

Yardstick Tool - Data Management



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Home > **Data Management**

Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Choose any single group of questions:

Question Groups:	Date Completed
Information Management Systems	no past results
Data Accuracy and Security	no past results
Data Analysis and Reporting	no past results

Individual Report

Aggregate Report

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Yardstick Tool - Communication/ Coordination with Partners

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Home > **Communication and Coordination with Partners**

Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Choose any single group of questions:

Question Groups:	Date Completed
Working Relationships	no past results
Outbreak Planning	no past results

[Individual Report](#) [Aggregate Report](#)

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Yardstick Tool - Administration Organization



Home Administration Organization

Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Choose any single group of questions:

Question Groups:	Date Completed
Laboratory Website	no past results
Legal Issues	no past results
Laboratory Certifications and Accreditations	no past results
Budget	no past results
Facilities	no past results
Testing/Safety Equipment	no past results
Communications Equipment	no past results
Personnel	no past results
Training and Continuing Education (CE)	no past results
Laboratory Safety	no past results

Individual Report

Aggregate Report

For Whom is the Tool Designed?

- Any PHL* that performs foodborne disease testing
 - Pathogens
 - Chemicals
 - Radiation
- Designed to evaluate the capability & capacity of a state or jurisdiction's food safety system and identify any gaps that might exist

“Public Health Laboratory”

- A state, regional, or local public health laboratory or state agriculture or chemist laboratory that performs testing in support of public health authorities (state division of public health or state department of agriculture) in their jurisdiction (from Yardstick Glossary of Terms)
- More than just clinical public health laboratories...

What Will be the End-product?



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Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Choose any single group of questions:

- Laboratory Testing
- Data Management
- Communication and Coordination with Partners
- Administration Organization

Individual Report Aggregate Report

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Individual Report

-- Select Group -- -- Select Question Group Name --

Laboratory Testing : Collection, Submission, and Storage of Specimens/Samples

Key:
 Green ✓ = Good answer
 Red X = Needs attention, high priority
 Yellow X = Needs attention, medium priority
 Blue X = Needs attention, low priority

Question	Priority	5/8/2014 5:05:37 PM	5/8/2014 5:07:32 PM	5/8/2014 5:08:48 PM
1. Does your laboratory have written policies and procedures regarding specimen/sample collection and transport?	2	✓	✓	X
2. If Yes above...	2			
2.1 Are these written policies and procedures available to all laboratory personnel and clients who submit specimens/samples to the laboratory?	2	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Are specimen/sample requirements and procedures for collection and transport embedded in each testing SOP?	2	✓	✓	✓
2.3 Is there documentation of at least annual review by the laboratory director?	2	✓	✓	✓
2.4 Does the laboratory director or designee approve all changes before implementation?	2	✓	X	✓

Individual Report- Cont'd

3.7 The laboratory's requirements for specimen/sample labeling	1	✓	✓	✓
3.8 Handling and storage conditions between collection and delivery to the laboratory.	1	✓	✓	✓
3.9 Packaging and shipping requirements	1	✓	✓	✓
3.10 A clear listing of rejection criteria	1	✓	✓	✓
3.11 Laboratory contact information for questions	1	X	X	X
<p>4. Does your laboratory requisition form include the following elements?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patient/ sample identifier 2. Patient sex (if applicable) 3. Patient date of birth or age (if applicable) 4. Patient contact information (if applicable) 5. Name and address of the physician or person legally authorized to order the test 6. The test(s) requested 7. Date and time of specimen/sample collection 8. Source of specimen/sample 9. Additional information as required <p>Your form contains:</p>	2	X	X	X

What Will be the End-product?



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Yardstick Self Assessment Tool for Public Health Food Safety Testing

Choose any single group of questions:

Laboratory Testing

Data Management

Communication and Coordination with Partners

Administration Organization

Individual Report

Aggregate Report

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Aggregate Report

Aggregate Report

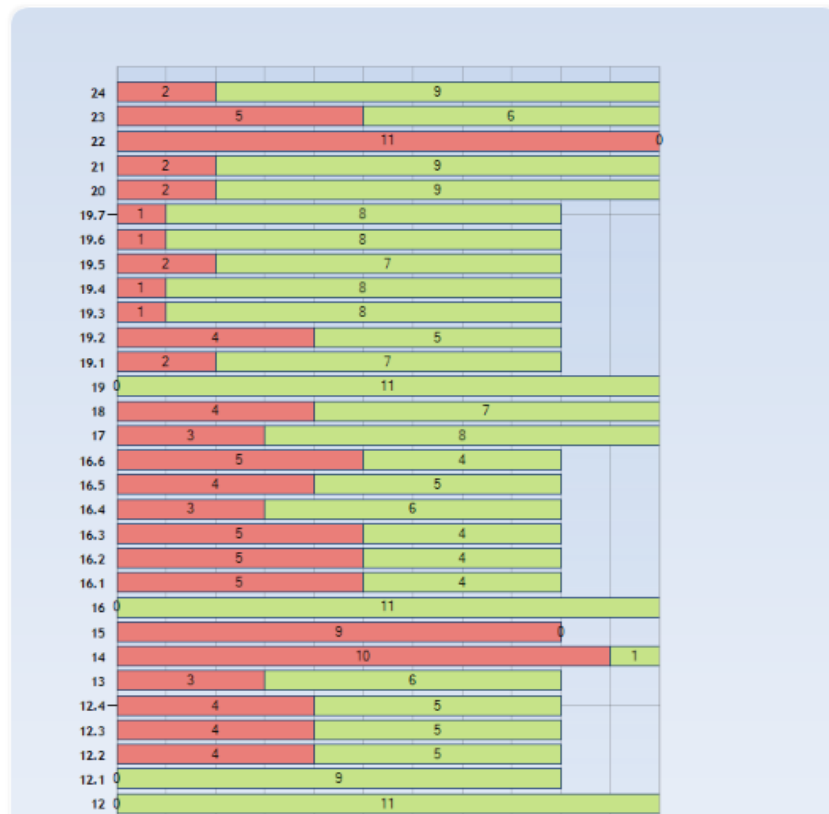
-- Select Group -- Laboratory Testing

-- Select Question Group Name -- Collection, Submission, and Storage

Get Report

Print Report

Laboratory Testing : Collection, Submission, and Storage of Specimens/Samples



Question

24. Does your laboratory have a protocol for ensuring the security and integrity of isolates stored off-site?

23. Does your laboratory store any isolates off-site?

22. If yes to question 20, does your destruction protocol for stored isolates include (check all that apply)?

21. Does your laboratory have a protocol in place for the destruction of stored isolates when your facility either runs out of physical space for storage or your facility deems the isolates no longer significant to justify storage any longer?

20. Does your PHL have a stored specimen inventory system or database for facilitating retrieval of stored isolates?

19.7 Surveillance cameras

19.6 Isolate usage log

19.5 Regular inspections of the security measures

19.4 General signage, not indicating specific names and location of organisms, on the exterior of storage equipment

19.3 Background checks of employees

Assessment Results

User: timothy.monson@slh.wisc.edu [Change Password](#) [LogOut](#)



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[Home](#) > Survey Results Report

Survey Results Report

-- Select Group -- -- Select Question Group Name -- [Get Report](#) [Print Report](#)

Laboratory Testing : Collection, Submission, and Storage of Specimens/Samples

Key:
Green ✓ = Good answer
Red X = Needs attention, high priority
Yellow X = Needs attention, medium priority
Blue X = Needs attention, low priority

Question	Priority	5/8/2014 5:05:37 PM	5/8/2014 5:07:32 PM	5/8/2014 5:08:48 PM
1. Does your laboratory have written policies and procedures regarding specimen/sample collection and transport?	2	✓	✓	X

How Can Your PHL Use the Tool?

- See how your food safety system conforms to the Yardstick Task Force recommendations for food safety laboratory best practices
- View progress towards meeting the recommendations over time
- Use aggregate data to compare your food safety system to all others; possible opportunity to advocate for more resources

Yardstick Tool- Next Steps

- Increase awareness of the tool
 - APHL Annual Meeting
 - 2014 APHL Webinar
- Develop process for revisions and updates
 - Who, when and how
- APHL- collate de-identified data from all PH food safety systems/ sites
 - Can use data to advocate for more resources
 - Can use data to prioritize programmatic efforts

Yardstick Task Force

- **John Fontana**- CT SPHL
- **Heather Green**- Formerly APHL Food Safety
- **Billie Ann Juni**- MN DOH-PHL
- **Sun Kim**- FL Dept. of Ag and Consumer Services
- **Kirsten Larson**- APHL Food Safety
- **Tim Monson**- WI SPHL
- * **Craig Hedberg**- Univ. MN School of Public Health
- **Shari Shea**- APHL Director of Food Safety
- **Lori Smith**- Utah Unified SPHL
- **Michael Smith**- Formerly APHL Food Safety
- **Denise Toney**- VA Div. Consol. Laboratory Services
- **Victor Waddell**- AZ BSLS
- **Delores Willis**- MD DOH-PHL
- * **Pamela Jenkins**- NC DHHS DPH

THANK YOU

- You can provide additional feedback to info@aphl.org
- For more information about the Yardstick self-assessment tool, contact:
 - Tim Monson- timothy.monson@slh.wisc.edu
 - Kirsten Larson- kirsten.larson@aphl.org
- Special thanks to the Yardstick Task Force, APHL Food Safety Committee and others who have contributed to the Yardstick assessment tool

THANK YOU- Continued

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 - Robyn Atkinson
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 - Elizabeth Delamater
 - Kirsten Larson
 - Yvonne Salfinger