Welcome to the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) Laboratory System Improvement Program (L-SIP) Update. This newsletter is designed to provide information to states interested in improving performance of their state public health laboratory systems. You are encouraged to share this update with your system partners and to share with us any new resources, experiences or activities related to system improvement.

Arizona L-SIP Experience

Arizona was the most recent state and the 24th to conduct an L-SIP assessment. Kathryn Wangsness (Assistant Office Chief, Arizona State Public Health Laboratory) summarized the L-SIP experience below.

The Arizona State Public Health Laboratory (ASPHL) conducted the L-SIP assessment on December 14, 2010, with 52 partners from throughout the state. Participants included representatives from local health and environmental departments, Civil Support Team members, clinical laboratories, environmental laboratories, vendors, Newborn Screening programs, a local college, risk management personnel and many others.

The participation, discussions and results were insightful and successful in identifying areas of improvement and attendees were enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate. “The L-SIP experience was extraordinary, and illuminated the vast and diverse services facilitated by the State Public Health Laboratory,” said Julie Stiak from Phoenix Community College, “The State Public Health Laboratory and its staff provide quality services that positively impact the entire community.”

In addition, many attendees expressed their excitement at being able to meet and discuss issues face-to-face, to network with many of their colleagues and to discover other areas of the laboratory system that they did not interact with normally. Many shared a lot of the same experiences and were able to talk through the issues with their statewide counterparts.

Some of the major themes that arose from the L-SIP assessment were mobilizing and having greater collaboration among partners, evaluating the accessibility and effectiveness of personal and population based services and linking people to necessary health services.

Following the assessment, an initial determination of next steps includes establishing/reestablishing a laboratory partners meeting with stakeholders and expanding the distribution of the ASPHL laboratory newsletter. Long term next steps consist of evaluating training needs and determining creative ways to deliver needed training, reviewing data systems, and encouraging advocacy of the laboratory system.

First Use of L-SIP Tool for Local Public Health Laboratory System Assessment

On November 18, the City of Milwaukee Health Department Public Health Laboratory was the first local institution to tailor and use the L-SIP assessment tool to assess the local public health laboratory system. Approximately 60-70 members of the laboratory system, as well as 10 laboratory staff members participated in the assessment. The event encouraged a conversation among partners. “The interchange of ideas from diverse viewpoints was remarkable,” said Steve Gradus, the City of Milwaukee laboratory director. The assessment was received positively, and many of the participants volunteered to be involved in post-assessment activities. Dr. Gradus is scheduled to present on the Milwaukee local public health...
laboratory system assessment in January during the APHL Laboratory Systems and Standards Committee in-person meeting.

L-SIP Tool Update Underway

A workgroup of APHL members and staff met in December to update the Laboratory System Improvement Program assessment tool, which is being revised with feedback from states that have completed an assessment. Measureable objectives were added to each of the Essential Service sections, while the Essential Services themselves did not change. An effort was made to also eliminate the redundancies within the tool. States using the updated L-SIP tool for a reassessment will be able to compare the new scores with the ones recorded using the original tool. The workgroup will finalize edits this winter and plans to pilot the updated version in Spring 2011.

Update on the Web Communicator

Web Communicator files have been uploaded to the APHL State Technical Assistance SharePoint site. The files consist of the template, a user’s guide and an installation guide. The Web Communicator is a web-based communication system that can be used for individual states websites to communicate with state partners and other states on the status of their quality improvement activities. It can be used to support planning for the L-SIP assessment, the assessment process, as well as ongoing improvement work.

The Web Communicator template is designed in WordPress, but can be customized by the state. In the template, there are tabs and links to resources and parts of the APHL website. It is important to take your own state’s individual website policies into consideration. Because the files are stored on a password-protected website, contact bertina.su@aphl.org for site access.

International Applications: Canada

In early 2011, the Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network plans to pilot their L-SIP assessment tool, a customized version of the APHL L-SIP tool, in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia prior to roll out for national use.

Online Resource Center (ORC)

The ORC houses resources to assist with improving the quality of state public health laboratory systems. State partners can benefit from access to a single repository of resources related to the national Laboratory System Improvement Program. Whether you have completed the L-SIP assessment or are taking the first steps toward quality improvement, the ORC can help you locate the information you need quickly via this unique collection of performance-related materials. APHL members are encouraged to contribute resources to the ORC by clicking on Suggest a New Resource. To access the ORC, please visit www.aphl.org/orc.
Schedule of Spring 2011 Cohort L-SIP Technical Assistance Calls

L-SIP offers technical assistance to state laboratories via multimedia trainings and conference calls. Technical assistance calls for the Spring 2011 cohort will be held from 11:30-12:30 PM EST on the following dates. The purpose of these calls is to inform state and local laboratories of the L-SIP process and resources available to them through APHL. Please use Bridge Number 877-485-1403 and Passcode 3709718.

- Tuesday, January 18, 2011
- Thursday, February 3, 2011
- The date of the third call is to be determined.

Mini Grant Usage and Deadlines

To support states participating in an L-SIP assessment, APHL is providing funding to state and local public health laboratories and their partners. Funds can be used for costs associated with the actual assessment, including purchasing refreshments/food, renting a facility, paying for facilitators, supplies, etc. Funds can also be used for performance improvement activities as a result of the assessment. Proposals will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Grantees are expected to complete the state assessment process and begin a performance improvement action plan. Mini grant applications for the Spring 2011 cohort must be received by COB Monday, February 14, 2011. For more information, contact bertina.su@aphl.org.

Schedule of Future L-SIP Practical Applications Calls

Formally called the Improvement technical assistances calls, the L-SIP Practical Applications calls will allow previous L-SIP states share their post-L-SIP assessment experiences, lessons learned and quality improvement resources with interested states.

These calls will be held from 1:00-2:00 PM EST on the following dates. Please use Bridge Number 877-485-1403 and Passcode 3709718.

- Tuesday, March 8, 2011
- Tuesday, April 26, 2011

If you are interested in participating in any of the aforementioned technical assistance calls, please contact Tina Su at bertina.su@aphl.org.

For More Information
Please visit: www.aphl.org/lsip

Or contact:

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