



The Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative

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Creating a Sustainable Public Health Laboratory System

The goal of the Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative (LEI) is to build a sustainable public health laboratory system in the United States. State and local public health laboratories operate under intense pressures. Deep budget cuts have affected their resilience and led to reduced laboratory testing capacity, termination of certain types of tests, and in some cases impaired support for outbreak investigation, surveillance, and emergency response. The LEI will help public health laboratories adopt high-efficiency management practices, helping build a strong platform for current and future test services.

LEI Partnerships

APHL and CDC co-sponsor the LEI. Partners include public health department directors and epidemiologists, public health and laboratory associations, clinical laboratories, and private industry.

New Resources in Development

- **Service Change Guide**
A "Practical Guide to Assessing and Planning Implementation of Public Health Laboratory Service Changes" will help laboratories considering service changes.
- **Informatics Self-Assessment with Guidance**
This tool will assist laboratories in sustaining current capabilities and addressing gaps through standards-based best practices.
- **Procurement Strategies**
This includes informing state procurement officials regarding public health lab and creating a central repository of information relating to equipping and supplying PHLs.
- **LEAN Training**
Techniques used to eliminate inefficiencies from laboratory procedures and the laboratory workspace will be shared.

Activities

Under the LEI, APHL and CDC have engaged in various activities. These include:

- Developing a guide addressing service delivery changes, which will include case studies;
- Exploring strategies to standardize testing platforms;
- Exploring joint purchasing strategies through multi-state agreements;
- Exploring fee-for-service/billing issues in conjunction with other organizations (e.g., ASTHO, NACCHO, AMCHP, NASTAD);
- Consolidating data collection and reporting to allow PHLs to make full use of the data that are being collected;
- Identifying informatics needs of PHLs (e.g., integrating billing into LIMS);
- Developing a workforce strategy (e.g., core competencies for the PHL workforce).

Examples of High Efficiency Management Practices

- Sharing of testing services across states
- Adoption of standardized testing platforms
- Optimum models of service organization
- Generation of new revenue sources
- Application of informatics solutions
- Procurement cost-savings

Action Steps

LEI Director Forums

To facilitate LEI as a member-based initiative, APHL hosted two forums to give laboratory directors an opportunity to explore ways to achieve higher efficiency in delivering public health laboratory services at the state and system levels.

Standardization of Platforms

APHL and CDC convened a focus group to develop strategies for improving testing platform selection and implementation in state and local public health laboratories.

Procurement

Through its National Center for Public Health Laboratory Leadership (NCPHLL), APHL convened members and partners to identify promising models for substantial cost-savings and greater efficiency in procuring laboratory equipment, supplies, and services.

Informatics

APHL and CDC hosted two joint meetings with representatives from state and local public health laboratories and subject matter experts within CDC, to identify strategies to improve PHL informatics capabilities on a national level. APHL and CDC are developing a self-assessment tool that will identify key informatics capabilities so PHLs can readily identify gaps, improve management processes, and develop action plans and budget requests to enhance their informatics capabilities.

LEI Data

A key LEI component is the collection and reporting of data and information related to the capabilities, capacities, organization, and services of state and local public health laboratories. APHL and the CDC have convened PHL directors and CDC colleagues to explore the feasibility of a joint data collection process and develop an implementation framework for an efficient data gathering and reporting process.

LEI Strategic Planning

APHL and CDC are convening an LEI strategic planning process to commence in June 2012. Initial research will include an environmental scan and key informant interviews. Based on these findings, the planning group will develop a strategic plan, which will be presented to APHL members for their review.

Laboratory Program Forum

CDC has created the new Laboratory Program Forum to give leaders of the CDC programs that provide funding and technical support to PHLs a structured means to explore opportunities to improve that support, reduce administrative burden on PHLs, and better achieve their public health goals.

For More Information

Visit www.aphl.org/lei.

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