

# **Guidelines for Sharing Public Health Laboratory Capacity**



## **PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES**

The purpose of these Guidelines is to describe the levels and sharing of laboratory services, procedures, responsibilities and reimbursement for laboratory testing and training for the purpose of assuring prompt and effective identification of food-borne contaminants, disease outbreak testing, and/or suspected bio- or chemical terrorism events.

The objective of these guidelines is to establish a general understanding among PNWBHA jurisdictions concerning mutual aid and cooperation during an outbreak of disease that spans borders or requires the expertise or capacity of other's laboratories. Such cooperation may include sharing of materials, expertise, resources, equipment, or facilities in the case of wide spread outbreaks or over/under capacity in a given area.

These Guidelines are based on an existing 2009 Memorandum of Understanding between the Washington State Department of Health and British Columbia Ministry of Health.

## **SURGE CAPACITY**

Jurisdictions are encouraged to provide surge capacity and testing facilities for each other as requested and feasible.

In the event of a biological emergency, disease outbreak, or act of biological/chemical terrorism jurisdictions are encouraged to make available personnel, equipment, and/or testing capacity to the other, subject to resource or bio-safety constraints, in order to increase lab capacity and shorten response time.

## **SURGE SUPPORT**

### **Requesting Support**

Jurisdictions may request support at any time by calling the primary contact (Annex A) and arranging mutually convenient times and places for assistance. Such request may be in the areas of testing, training, loan of equipment, capacity or supplies or other needs as may arise in the course of conducting either organization's business.

Such support will be accorded based on the capacity of the Testing Laboratory to provide such support at the time. Jurisdictions should endeavor to provide support whenever possible without interrupting the normal flow of business.

### **Shipping**

The cost of transportation, integrity of specimens, and cost of supplies and equipment used in transport either to or from the requesting laboratory are the sole responsibility of the Requestor. Special agreements may be established for the specific request.

### **Equipment**

Testing equipment may be made available at either laboratory depending upon workload and scheduling parameters. The potential use of either party's equipment by the other should be coordinated between the Primary Contacts prior to submission of any specimens.

Jurisdictions are responsible for maintenance and calibration of their own equipment and such equipment provided for use to the other on an as-is basis, with every attempt being made to ensure it is in good working order and properly calibrated unless otherwise noted. The requestor is responsible for calibration and maintenance of loaned instruments while in their possession.

### **Supplies**

The cost of testing supplies, reagents, and/or kits is the sole responsibility of the Requestor. Supplies used by the Testing Laboratory in support of the Requestor should be replaced by the Requestor at the earliest time possible or as mutually agreed between the Primary Contacts. Jurisdictions may make special arrangements to cover costs of supplies, reagents and/or kits for specific requests.

### **Personnel**

When personnel are shared between the two laboratories, personnel should be provided access to each laboratory during normal business hours upon mutual agreement between the Primary Contacts. Such personnel should be given temporary identification badges or other access credentials and should be escorted within the laboratory as necessary. Each party should ensure that general laboratory safety training has been provided to employees that may visit the other laboratory. Each laboratory should provide facility-specific safety training to visitors when personnel visit their facility.

The cost of safety equipment (respirators, filters, gowns, masks, etc.) is the sole responsibility of the Requestor. In the event Testing Laboratory provides materials, Requestor should replace such materials at the earliest

possible time after services have been provided and testing has concluded. Trading for services/materials/equipment different from those used may be possible when needed/requested by the Testing Laboratory.

While in each other's laboratory, personnel agree to abide by the rules, regulations, procedures and safety protocols of the other. Jurisdictions should establish and provide proof upon request that personnel hold appropriate security clearances prior to access security areas within each laboratory.

### **Chain-of-Custody Evidentiary Procedures**

Each laboratory is responsible for adhering to its own chain of custody protocols. If requested, each party should make available to the other any necessary documentation in order to maintain chain of custody while the specimens are in or in transit between their respective facilities.

### **Testing and Reporting of Results**

It will be the sole responsibility of the Testing Laboratory to test and provide timely results to the Requestor. Unless mutually agreed otherwise, testing protocols utilized will be those of the Testing Laboratory and the Requesting Laboratory agrees to accept these protocols as valid.

Unless otherwise stipulated through other agreement(s), all test results (positive or negative) from any tests will be reported directly to the Requestor for further action or disclosure. All test results will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be discussed by the Testing Laboratory with any outside party, group, agency, or media.

In all cases, the owner of the specimen is the Requestor.

### **Disposition of Samples**

Unless otherwise requested, only positive samples should be returned to the Requestor at their expense. Negative samples should be destroyed according to the testing laboratory's established protocols. In the event of positive test results, chain of custody procedures should be used to insure security of the sample following testing until such time as the sample is returned to the Requestor.

### **REIMBURSEMENT**

In the event one party uses supplies or consumable items to conduct testing on behalf of the other, the supplies should be replaced with like-

supplies by the Requestor as soon as possible after the testing has been completed. The party using supplies on behalf of the other should provide a complete listing of supplies used as soon as possible after the testing has been completed. The Testing Laboratory may waive replacement of expenditures or opt to trade for other materials or equipment of same value.

### **INDEMNIFICATION**

Each agency will defend, protect, and hold harmless the other agency from and against all claims, suits, and/or actions arising from any negligent or intentional act or omission of that agency's employees, agents and/or authorized subcontractor(s).

### **APPROVAL**

These Guidelines have been approved by the PNWBHA Joint Coordination Committee and are subject to the laws of the United States of America and the Government of Canada and the PNWBHA constituent jurisdictions.

Annex A

**Primary Contacts**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	
<b>British Columbia</b>	
<b>Idaho</b>	
<b>Oregon</b>	
<b>Montana</b>	
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	
<b>Washington</b>	
<b>Yukon</b>	