

The Role of the Bureau of Laboratories at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

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The role of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) is to coordinate and participate in laboratory networks in order to provide rapid identification of infectious agents, toxins, and chemical exposures allowing the medical community to provide appropriate prophylaxis and treatment to minimize morbidity and mortality. The laboratory provides surveillance assistance to detect and respond to public health emergencies. The public health laboratory may also establish and provide bio-monitoring subsequent to a chemical exposure event.

The BOL consists of four sections equipped to respond to acts of biologic terrorism, chemical threats, emerging infectious diseases, and public health threats and emergencies. The Division of Infectious Diseases, Microbiology and Virology Section, conducts tests to confirm biologic agents of interest and specimen referral to the national level Laboratory Response Network-Biological (LRN-B) laboratory. The Chemistry and Toxicology Division, Analytical Chemistry and Trace Metals Section, is a Laboratory Response Network-Chemical (LRN-C) Level 1 laboratory. This division coordinates referral of specimens to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and conducts tests on clinical specimens for chemical agents of concern.

The MDHHS BOL currently meets the LRN-C requirements as a Level 1 laboratory for the CDC. The BOL maintains test capability and capacity required by the LRN-C. Maintenance of personnel competencies, personnel procedural cross training, current surge capacity plans, adequate reagents and supplies, emergency plan exercises, and operational instrumentation and equipment with current service agreements ensures the ability of the BOL to respond to public health threats. Frequent communication with public health partners, including clinical laboratories, continues to ensure informed and appropriate response to chemical exposures deemed as public health threats.

The BOL and Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) collaborate to ensure adequate allocation and support for LRN-C activities. There is a track record of emergency transport of specimens from public health partners and hospitals throughout Michigan to the BOL, followed by the timely result and reporting to the appropriate partners.

In summary, the MDHHS BOL is responsible for:

- detecting and identifying agents of public health concern including human specimens and environmental samples;
- identifying chemical threat agent metabolites, utilizing LRN procedures;
- collaborating with the Poison Control Center;
- maintaining plans for and provide surge capacity response to the CDC and other LRN-C level one laboratories throughout the United States;
- working with health partners to ensure proper collection of clinical specimens during a public health event.