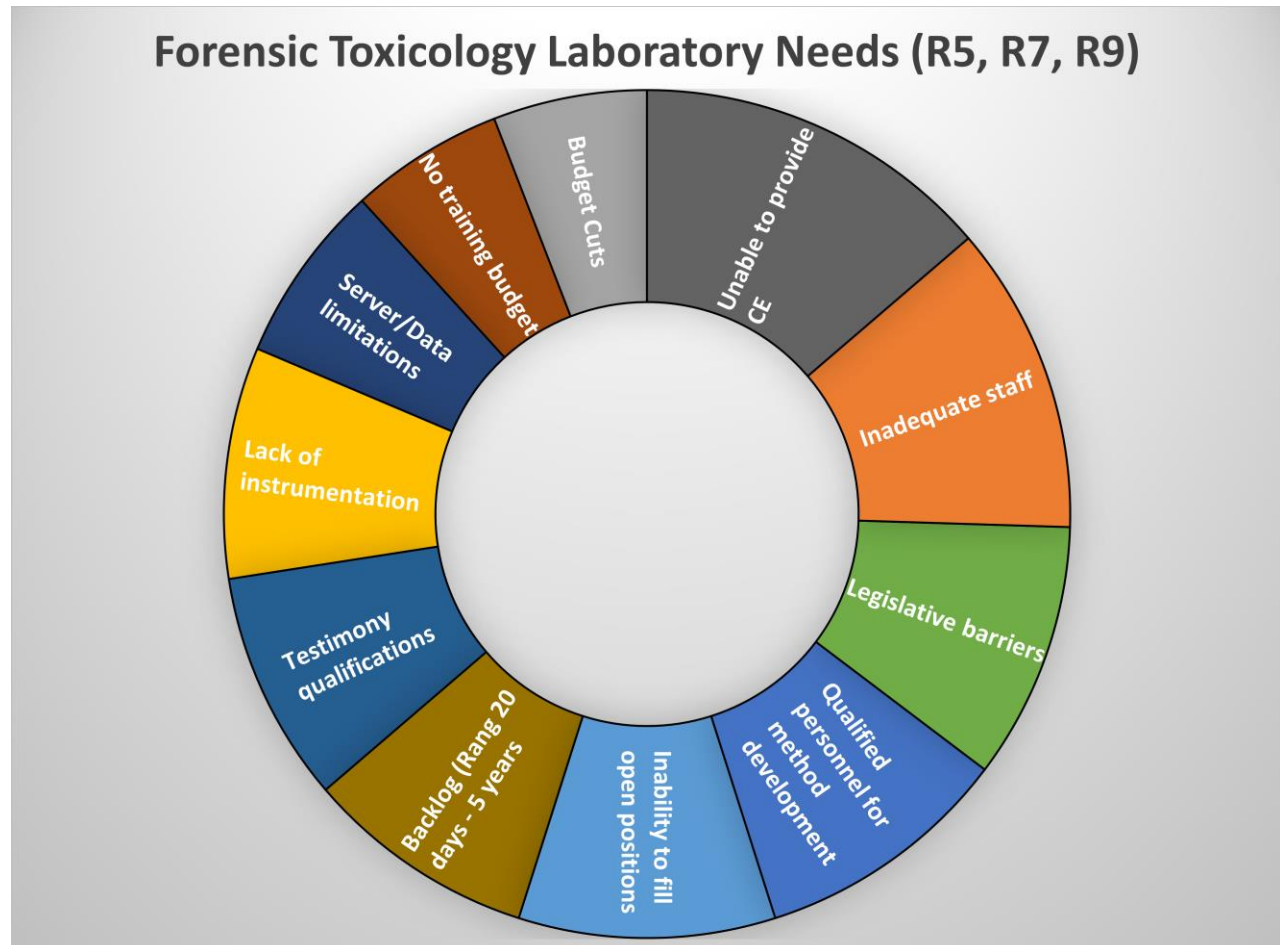


Regional Toxicology Liaison – Annual Report, October 2022

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The Regional Toxicology Liaisons (RTLs) were selected in January 2022. The RTLs began work on their respective regions in February. Their immediate duties were to identify the forensic toxicology laboratories and direct contacts in their regions. During this time, it was found that R9 has a number of private laboratories in addition to those that are publicly funded, which perform Driving Under the Influence of Drugs (DUID) casework. While it is important to collaborate with private laboratories, the focus for the RTLs remains with the public forensic toxicology laboratories. As of this report, the majority of the laboratories have been contacted and there has been a meeting between the RTL and the laboratories in their regions. During the initial meetings with the laboratories, it was confirmed that while several issues are universal for DUID laboratories, there yet remains barriers in funding, policies and statutes.

Early on, the RTLs received detailed feedback from the laboratories in their regions. Topics of the from the feedback included supply chain shortages, overall needs of the laboratories and training requests. The chart below shows the topics of need. The size of each box represents the percentage of need for the respective topic. All of the topics are similar in rank, which indicates that the resolution for laboratory issues will not be a “one size fits all” approach.



One of the most common requests for all laboratories in the RTL regions is the need to develop and validate new drug testing methods. A number of laboratories have the instrumentation required to perform the work, however, they lack the capability and resources to dedicate the time to method development. This is a key area that must be addressed to better align laboratories' drug testing within and between states. The RTLs have assisted laboratories with method development and validation plans and provided feedback; however, the lack of the necessary workforce to complete and implement the methods continues to be a barrier. The RTLs are continuing to focus on this issue, looking for areas to provide funding and resources.

Second to the need for drug testing methods, the next most common request of the RTLs is training. The following topics have been the most common among laboratories' requests:

- Testimony training
- Meeting testing recommendations and standards
- Method development and validation
- Prosecuting the drugged driver (toxicology centric)
- Oral fluid testing
- Toxicology drug results and interpretation

In September, the RTLs collaborated with the California Office of Traffic Safety and provided a webinar to forensic toxicology laboratories in each region which focused on courtroom testimony, overall public speaking techniques, and insight into anxiety in stressful situations. The feedback from the webinar was overwhelming and very positive. Most requested more of this but in person. In response, the RTLs are going to be traveling to Indiana in December to provide a full-day, in-person testimony training for the Indianapolis laboratory. The RTLs will use this training as a pilot to continue to develop the curriculum and will be looking to provide the training to their respective regions throughout 2023.

During the progress of the RTL project, states across the country were affected by various supply chain shortages. Of greatest concern were the 10 mL gray top blood collection tubes used in every state to collect specimens for DUID investigations. The RTLs collaborated with the Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT) to provide guidance and solutions to the tube shortage (<http://soft-tox.org/blood-tube-shortage>). Not only were the RTLs successful in providing support, but the initiative also led to connecting laboratories that did not normally collaborate. Those laboratories that were lacking in certain supplies were able to barter or trade for other laboratory items that were in short supply.

Since the announcement of the project, there have been several requests from highway safety partners to include the RTLs in working groups, task forces, assessments, and other meetings. The RTLs are working to attend every meeting where possible and, if needed, the Project Manager (PM) attends and provides the information of the meeting back to the RTLs. In addition to meeting and committee attendance, the RTLs reach out to the laboratories in the respective state to ensure they are also aware of the meeting and encourage their involvement.

So far, attending stakeholder meetings alongside the laboratories has proven to be very successful in connecting the state laboratory with various groups that otherwise did not know of each other.

The Buy America Act continues to be a consistent barrier to the purchase of the instrumentation required to perform DUID testing. The RTLs have been in communication with the State Highway Safety Offices (SHSO) and other partners to find ways to work through the limitations of the Act. Discussions on the reallocation of current funds are often the key point; however, most forensic laboratories lack sufficient funding to perform day-to-day operations. The RTLs continue to explore innovative solutions to the Act.

In September, the Michigan State Police (MSP) laboratory reached out to the PM for guidance on THC testing in blood. An issue was found in the laboratory's legacy THC testing method and all THC testing for the MSP was stopped. Sabra Jones (R5) was in contact with the laboratory and has been working with them to coordinate a new testing method. Additionally, the PM arranged challenge samples for the MSP laboratory and provided expertise in the review of their method development and validation. The RTLs assisted in providing subject matter experts (SME) to Michigan that can review their method and validation plan. During the review, the SMEs will provide feedback so the laboratory will be confident once they are able to put their new THC testing method into production. The initial response from the Michigan laboratory has been very grateful and appreciative of the RTL's assistance.

Project challenges:

The RTLs consistently receive requests from laboratories and SHSOs in regions outside of the current project scope. In some instances, the RTLs have been able to provide assistance without disrupting the current work in the project regions. However, when this is not feasible, the PM steps in to provide the necessary support. Some of the assistance was completed in a few virtual meetings, and others are ongoing. The expansion of the RTL positions into other regions across the country will be vital for the overall success of the program.

One of the goals for 2022 was to hold an in-person, all-region meeting. Feedback from the laboratories was not in favor of this and they stated they would prefer a virtual meeting. Since most laboratories have limited funding for continuing education, they would prefer to use any travel funds to attend the annual SOFT meeting. Given this information, the RTLs will be looking for ways to integrate training or meeting with their respective regions during the annual SOFT meeting. The RTLs have decided to hold an all-region virtual meeting in the first week of January 2023.

Future goals:

In 2023, the RTLs will be building on the testimony curriculum, training and creating new content focusing on method development and validation strategies. There has been interest from the University of Wisconsin, Madison to assist in any training the RTLs provide and

potentially become a repository for on-demand training. The benefit of being a partner with the UW would be the ability to provide continuing education certificates from an academic institution and a partner that can serve as a repository for training curriculum. The Project Manager will continue the conversation with the UW to see what would be most beneficial for the RTL project. As always, the commitment to the current drug testing guidelines and standards will be the anchor for all training as this ensures the alignment of all laboratories and their testing scope.

The Organizational Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB) has requested further collaboration with the RTL project to promote standards in forensic toxicology. The Project Manager will work with a representative from the FSSB to facilitate communication and collaboration. Providing laboratories with access to and practical applications of forensic toxicology standards will assist in the overall goal of laboratory alignment.

See Appendix for full list of activities and financial report

Appendix

RTL Activities, Q1, 2022

Region 5:

Past Activities:

March 22 - Prosecuting the Drugged Driver-Michigan
April 11 - Emerging Drug Scientific Working Group-Ohio
April 6 - New England Area Toxicologists

Upcoming events:

April 25-28 - Indiana Highway Traffic Safety Conference
May 19 - Current Trends in Forensic Toxicology Symposium
Region 5 Oral Fluid Summit, TBD

Region 7

Past Activities:

March 2, 2022 – Met with Region 7 Administrators and Regional Program Managers, JOL, and LEL (virtual)
March 21, 2022 – Met with State of Kansas laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
March 22, 2022 – Region 7 All State Conference Meeting, will occur monthly on the last Tuesday of the month (virtual)
March 24, 2022 – RTL Introduction with National Advanced Driving Simulator (virtual)
March 31, 2022 – Met with State of Arkansas laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
April 4, 2022 – Quarterly LEL conference call (virtual)
April 7, 2022 - Met with State of Iowa laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
April 11-13, 2022 – GTSB Impaired Driving Program Assessment (State of Iowa) (virtual)
April 13, 2022 – Arkansas Impaired Driving Prevention Task Force (in person)

Upcoming events:

April 18, 2022 - Meet with State of Arkansas laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
April 21 – NHTSA Regional Operations and Program Delivery Monthly Conference (virtual)
April 25-27, 2022 – Region 7 State Partners Meeting (in-person)
April 28-29, 2022 – On-site visit with the State of Kansas Laboratories (in-person)
May 3, 2022 - Meet with State of Missouri laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
May 20, 2022 – Missouri Impaired Driving Subcommittee Meeting (virtual)

June 22, 2022 NHTSA Region 7 Laboratories Meeting with laboratory representatives and state stakeholders (virtual)

July 27-29, 2022 – NASID Conference 2022 (in-person)?

August 18, 2022 - Springfield Mo. Attend annual Law Enforcement Officers and Chiefs sponsored by the Federal Prosecutors Office. (in-person)

August 21-23, 2022 – IACP Impaired Driving and Traffic Safety Conference (in-person)?

Future Activities Planned:

Schedule visits individually with laboratories both in person and virtual

Region 9

Past Activities:

April 6 - April 7th – NHTSA Region 9 Partner’s Meeting, presented on RTL’s Project

Upcoming Events:

Late April or Early May

Setting meetings/visits with

CA Office of Traffic Safety

AZ Governor’s Office of Highway Safety

HI Department of Transportation

American Samoa Department of Public Safety

Guam Department of Public Works

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

June 23rd – 11 am PST – 2 pm PST

NHTSA Region 9 -Laboratories Meeting – including traffic safety stakeholders

June 27th-July 29th

AZ Prosecutors and Law Enforcement Conference

RTL Activities, Q2, 2022

Region 5:

March 22 – Prosecuting the Drugged Driver (Michigan TSRP)

April 6 – NEAT Meeting (Presenter)

April 6 – Region 5 Law Enforcement Liaison Meeting

April 7 – ASB Toxicology CB Meeting

April 11 – Ohio Quarterly EDSWG Meeting: RTL Overview (Presenter)

April 21 – Regional Operations and Program Delivery (ROPD) Office Call

April 25-27 – Indiana Highway Traffic Safety Conference (Presenter)
-Included laboratory visit with IN state lab
April 26 – National Safety Council (NSC) Impairment Advisory Board Meeting
April 28 – Illinois TSRP Meeting
April 29 – Illinois Impaired Driving Taskforce Meeting
April 29 – Wisconsin Place of Last Drink Meeting
May 5 – ASB Toxicology CB Meeting
May 10 – NSC Cannabis Section Call
May 11 – SOFT Postmortem Committee Meeting
May 13 – R5 Impaired Driving Working Group
May 13 – Protecting New Yorkers from Drugged Driving (A9554/S8913)
May 20 – Current Trends in Toxicology Symposium (Presenter)
June 3 – ASB Toxicology CB Meeting
June 10 – IL-Midwest Impaired Driving Conference Speaker Meeting
June 10 – SOFT Drugs and Driving Committee Meeting
June 14 – NSC Cannabis Section Call
June 21 – R5 RTL Quarterly Meeting and JOL/TSRP Updates

Region 7

April 6 – LEL Informational Conference Call
April 7 – Meeting with State of Iowa labs and partners (virtual)
April 11-15 – Iowa Impaired Driving Assessment
April 12 – 13 – Arkansas Impaired Driving Prevention Taskforce (Presenter)
April 18 – Meeting with State of Nebraska labs and partners (virtual)
April 21 – Regional Operations and Program Delivery Monthly meeting (virtual)
April 25-29 – Region 7 Partners Meeting
-Included three laboratory visits in Kansas
May 4 – Meeting with Kansas Department of Transportation (virtual)
May 6 – Meeting with State of New York interested parties
-this was a request for input regarding legislation in NY
May 20 – Impaired Driving Subcommittee meeting (Missouri)
May 24 – All State Conference Monthly Meeting
June 22 – R7 RTL Quarterly Meeting
June 28 - All State Conference Monthly Meeting

Region 9

April 6-7 - Region 9 Partners meeting
May 4 – CNMI Discussion regarding oral fluid
May 5 – NHTSA/AAA OTS meeting, another meeting with OTS on this date
May 11 – CA Impaired Driving Task Force Meeting
May 12 – R9 Sentinel Surveillance meeting

May 13 – NY Toxicology Information Presentation to NY legislators (Presenter)
May 18 – Laboratory visit – SF
May 23 – Laboratory visit – Santa Clara
June 7 – Laboratory visit – Contra Costa
June 9 – Laboratory visit – Sacramento Co
June 13 – Laboratory visit – Solano Co
June 20 – Meeting with CHP Chief Helena Williams and Senior District Attorney General Harindar Kapur regarding NY Task Force inquiry for assistance
June 23 – R9 RTL Quarterly Meeting
June 26-29 – AZ Prosecutors and Law Enforcement Conference
-Presented the RTL project to R8, R9, and R10 at the Western DRE State Coordinators Meeting.
-Included laboratory visits with Mesa, Phoenix PD, and Arizona DPS (July 1)
-Included laboratory visits with Mesa, Tucson PD, Phoenix PD and Arizona DPS (July 1)
June 30 – Meeting with Christine Moore to discuss the previous CA Surveillance Study

Meet every Wed with NHTSA R9

RTL Activities, Q3, 2022

Region 5:

7/6/2022: R5 Weekly Meeting
7/27 – 29/2022: NASID Conference/presentation
7/31/2022: NCLS meeting/presentation
7/9/2022: R5 Minnesota OTS Meeting
8/19/2022: Massachusetts Forensic Science Oversight Board Meeting
8/19/2022: Minnesota DWI Taskforce Meeting
8/29/2022: Wisconsin Impaired Driving Working Group Meeting
9/7/2022: Midwest Toxicology Collaborative Roundtable
9/17 – 21/2022: Governor’s Highway Safety Assoc conference/presenter
9/29/2022: National Safety Council Impairment Advisory Board Meeting
**Weekly NHTSA R5 meetings*
**Monthly ASB Toxicology Consensus Body Meetings*
**Monthly AFDO/FOCUS Cannabis Legalization Workgroup Meetings*
**Monthly Dane County Traffic Safety Commission Meetings*

Region 7

7/13/2022: LEL/IACP Information Sharing Meeting
7/27 – 29/2022: NASID Conference/presentation
8/4/2022: Nebraska Title 177 Work Group Meeting
8/17 - 19/2022: Springfield, MO lab visits and conference
-Missouri Impaired Driving Subcommittee Meeting/presentation
8/21 – 23/2022: IDTS conference/presentation
9/7/2022: Midwest Toxicology Collaborative Roundtable
9/9/2022: Iowa Impaired Driving Task Force Meeting
9/14/2022: Region 7 Quarterly Regional Meeting

9/26 – 29/2022: Borkenstein Drug Course/presentation

**ANSI/ASB monthly meeting*

**Monthly R7 State Conference Meeting*

Region 9

7/1/2022: Arizona DPS Lab Visit

7/27 – 29/2022: NASID Conference/presentation

8/21 – 23/2022: IDTS conference/presentation

8/25/2022: San Diego Sheriff Crime Lab visit

-Also met with SD Coroner Lab

8/29/2022: Meeting with NHTSA and CA OTS about drug prevalence study**

8/30/2022: LA County Coroner Lab visit

8/31/2022: Orange County Crime Lab visit

-Also met with LA Sheriff Dept Crime Lab

9/1/2022: SB County Lab visit

9/9/2022: Meeting with Tara Kelley-Baker Surveillance Study**

9/12/2022: Meeting with RTL's and OSAC

9/13/2022: RTL R9 Quarterly Meeting

9/20/2022: DTAP Meeting

9/27/2022: Drug Prevalence Meeting with UC Davis and CA OTS**

**Weekly R9 meetings*

***Several meetings for planning the CA Surveillance Study*