

# VERSION 2.0 WORK IN PROGRESS: Laboratory Capacity – What Have We Learned from Accredited Health Departments? August 2018



The Public Health Accreditation Board is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to improving and protecting the health of the public by advancing and ultimately transforming the quality and performance of state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments.



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This document summarizes what PHAB has learned about how accredited health are addressing laboratory-related activities. In particular, it focuses on the reasons that health departments struggled with the seven measures in Domain 2 and one measure in Domain 11 that relate to public health labs. It also includes findings from Section II of accredited health departments' Annual Reports.

Below is a summary of the distribution of assessments for the selected Domain 2 and Domain 11 measures, as well as the percentage of health departments that were required to address each measure in an action plan. In general, performance on these measures is very strong. Most of these Measures fall within the top third of all Measures in terms of performance (i.e., higher proportion assessed as Fully or Largely Demonstrated and smaller proportion included in an Action Plan compared to most Measures). Performance on Measures 2.2.1 and 2.3.3 fall within in the middle third among all Measures (i.e., neither among the highest or the lowest performing Measures). It is important to note that these Measures were selected because they explicitly reference laboratories in their requirements. However, they are broader than laboratory capacity. Therefore, health departments may have been assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated on these Measures for reasons unrelated to their laboratory work. These data are for 34 state health departments (SHDs) and 234 local health departments (LHDs) whose Site Visit Reports have been finalized and reviewed by the Accreditation Committee.

Measure	Fully Demonstrated		Largely Demonstrated		Slightly Demonstrated		Not Demonstrated		Action Plans	
	SHD	LHD	SHD	LHD	SHD	LHD	SHD	LHD	SHD	LHD
<b>2.1.4</b>	79.4%	69.2%	20.6%	25.2%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
<b>2.1.5</b>	70.6%	75.2%	23.5%	20.9%	5.9%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
<b>2.2.1</b>	73.5%	73.5%	26.5%	17.1%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	6.4%
<b>2.3.1</b>	64.7%	72.6%	35.3%	23.9%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
<b>2.3.2</b>	88.2%	80.3%	11.8%	16.7%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
<b>2.3.3</b>	52.9%	56.0%	26.5%	35.9%	20.6%	6.4%	0.0%	1.7%	2.9%	5.1%
<b>2.3.4</b>	73.5%	76.5%	23.5%	20.5%	0.0%	2.6%	2.9%	0.4%	2.9%	2.1%
<b>11.1.7</b>	55.9%	58.1%	44.1%	38.9%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	1.3%

To better understand health departments' performance on these Measures, PHAB conducted an analysis of the conformity comments of health departments that were assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated for the first 256 Site Visit Reports. The results of those analyses are shown below. For each Measure, the most common reasons for the assessment are listed, including the number of health departments for which that reason was indicated. One health department could have multiple reasons listed.

### Performance on Measure 2.1.4

Measure 2.1.4 requires that the health department demonstrate collaborative work through established governmental and community partnerships on investigation of reportable disease, disease outbreaks, and environmental public health issues. The most common challenges among health departments assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated were:

- Requirement 2 – Documentation did not clearly describe partners' roles in investigations (6 health departments)
- Documentation does not meet PHAB date requirements (5 health departments)
- Requirement 1 – Documentation submitted was not a contract or MOU (4 health departments)
- Requirement 1 – Documentation submitted did not pertain to disease or environmental health investigation (4 health departments)

**Note: Requirement 3, which addresses “laboratory testing for notifiable/reportable diseases” was not among the most common challenges.**

### Performance on Measure 2.1.5

Measure 2.1.5 requires that health departments monitor timely reporting of notifiable/reportable diseases, lab test results, and investigation results. Among health departments assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated, the most common challenge was:

- Requirement 1 – Insufficient evidence of tracking various elements of investigation (8 health departments)

### Performance on Measure 2.2.1

Measure 2.2.1 requires that health departments have protocols in place for the containment/mitigation of public health problems and environmental hazards. Among health departments assessed as Not Demonstrated or Slightly Demonstrated, the following were the most common challenges:

- Lacked evidence of the use of prophylaxis and emergency biologics (12 health departments)
- Lacked evidence of disease-specific containment and mitigation (10 health departments)
- Lacked evidence of clinical management (10 health departments)
- Lacked evidence of contact management (9 health departments)
- Lacked process for exercising legal authority for disease control (8 health departments)

**Note: While it was not among the most common challenges, there were 5 health departments that did not document communication with the public health laboratory.**

### Performance on Measure 2.3.1

Measure 2.3.1 requires that health departments have 24/7 emergency access to epidemiological and environmental public health resources capable of providing rapid detection, investigation, and containment/mitigation of public health problems and environmental public health hazards. The challenges for health departments assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated varied, but the most common were:

- Requirement 1 – unclear provision for 24/7 access (3 health departments)
- Requirement 2 – insufficient call list for contacting epidemiological and environmental public health resources (3 health departments)
- Requirement 3 – no list/description of contracts/MOUs that define access to resources (3 health departments)
- Requirement 3 – MOUs provided, but access to resources not defined (3 health departments)

**Note: None of these Not or Slightly Demonstrated conformity comments explicitly cited lack of laboratory access.**

### **Performance on Measure 2.3.2**

Measure 2.3.2 requires 24/7 access to laboratory resources capable of providing rapid detection, investigation, and containment of health problems and environmental public health hazards. The challenges for health departments assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated varied, but the most common were:

- Requirement 3 – Narrow scope of specimens submitted (4 health departments)
- Requirement 2 – Lack of contracts/MOUs with public and private laboratories to provide support services (3 health departments)

### **Performance on Measure 2.3.3**

Measure 2.3.3 requires access to laboratory and other support personnel and infrastructure capable of providing surge capacity. The most common challenges for health departments assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated were:

- Requirement 2 – Lack of specific staffing (16 health departments)
- Requirement 1 – Personnel to provide surge capacity not pre-identified (14 health departments)
- Requirement 2 – Lack description of how staff can access staffing list for surge capacity (14 health departments)
- Requirement 1 – Lack surge capacity protocol (8 health departments)
- Requirement 5 – Lack listing and description of MOUs in place for additional staff and services for surge capacity (8 health departments)
- Requirement 1 – Documentation does not address surge capacity (7 health departments)
- Requirement 3 – Equipment list is incomplete or missing key components (7 health departments)
- Requirement 3 – Equipment list does not indicate how equipment will be deployed for surge capacity (6 health departments)
- Requirement 4 – Lack exercise schedule for training or exercises to prepare personnel who will serve in a surge capacity (6 health departments)
- Requirement 2 – Documentation does not address surge capacity (6 health departments)
- Requirement 5 – Lack MOUs/agreements that relate specifically to laboratory services (6 health departments)

### **Performance on Measure 2.3.4**

Measure 2.3.4 requires that health departments collaborate among Tribal, state, and local health departments to build capacity and share resources to address Tribal, state, and local efforts to provide for rapid detection, investigation, and containment/mitigation of public health problems and environmental public health hazards. The challenges for health departments assessed as Not or Slightly Demonstrated varied, but the most common was:

- Requirement 1 – No evidence of collaboration with other health departments – local, Tribal, or state (5 health departments)

### **Performance on Measure 11.1.7**

Measure 11.1.7 requires that facilities (including laboratories) are clean, safe, accessible, and secure. Requirement 1 specifically requires that health departments provide licenses for their laboratories. Of

the health department assessed as Not Demonstrated or Slightly Demonstrated, one did not provide the necessary laboratory licenses.

### **Annual Reports**

As part of Section II of the Annual Reports, health departments are asked to describe a quality improvement project and to indicate to which Domain(s) the project relates. Twenty-seven health departments indicated their projects related to Domain 2, including 6 that specifically mention lab activities. Those projects focus on:

- Specimen processing time during surge
- “Too long in transit” blood lead specimens
- Tracking private well samples
- Distribution of private water testing kits being
- Morbidity reports for chlamydia
- Turnaround time of lab results for HIV

In addition, in the section on emerging public health issues, two health departments described laboratory services, including one description of work related to whole-genome sequencing infrastructure and another lab designated as an Antimicrobial Resistance Regional Laboratory.