Continuing Public Health Laboratory Operations Through Challenging Circumstances

12th National Conference on Laboratory Aspects of Tuberculosis

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CDC TB Continuity of Operations Plan Project

Sean Buono, PhD, PHM
Microbiologist
CDC, NCHHSTP, Division of Tuberculosis Elimination (DTBE), Laboratory Branch

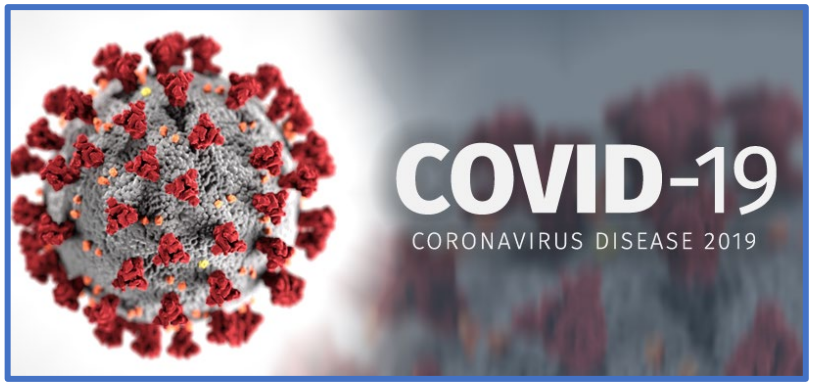
Monica Youngblood, MPH, M(ASCP)
Laboratory Consultant
CDC, NCHHSTP, Division of Tuberculosis Elimination (DTBE), Laboratory Branch

Alaska late 2018 Earthquake

Nebraska 2019 Flooding

California 2019/2021 Wildfires

Puerto Rico 2020 Earthquakes



Tennessee Tornado 2020

Tennessee/North Carolina Flooding 2021

Louisiana Hurricane Ida 2021

Why is a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) Important?

- Identifies essential functions
- Ensures essential functions can be continued throughout, or resumed after, a disruption of normal operations

Important to have in place prior to an emergency and/or disaster to:

- Identify essential personnel and make them aware they are essential
- Create a plan for administration succession
- Pre-determine delegations of authority
- Identify locations, other than the primary facility, that will be used to carry out essential functions
- Identify communication methods (internal and external) in coordination with other agencies
- Identify, protect and make readily available electronic and hard copy documents, references, records, information systems and equipment needed

Project Interest and Goals

- Public Health Laboratories (PHLs) have recently experienced several situations that have disrupted laboratory services:
  - COVID-19 pandemic
  - Natural disasters
  - Other interruption of service events

- Did PHL have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)?

- Was mycobacteriology testing specifically defined as part of the COOP?

- Will mycobacteriology laboratories be prepared for the next event?

Project Plan

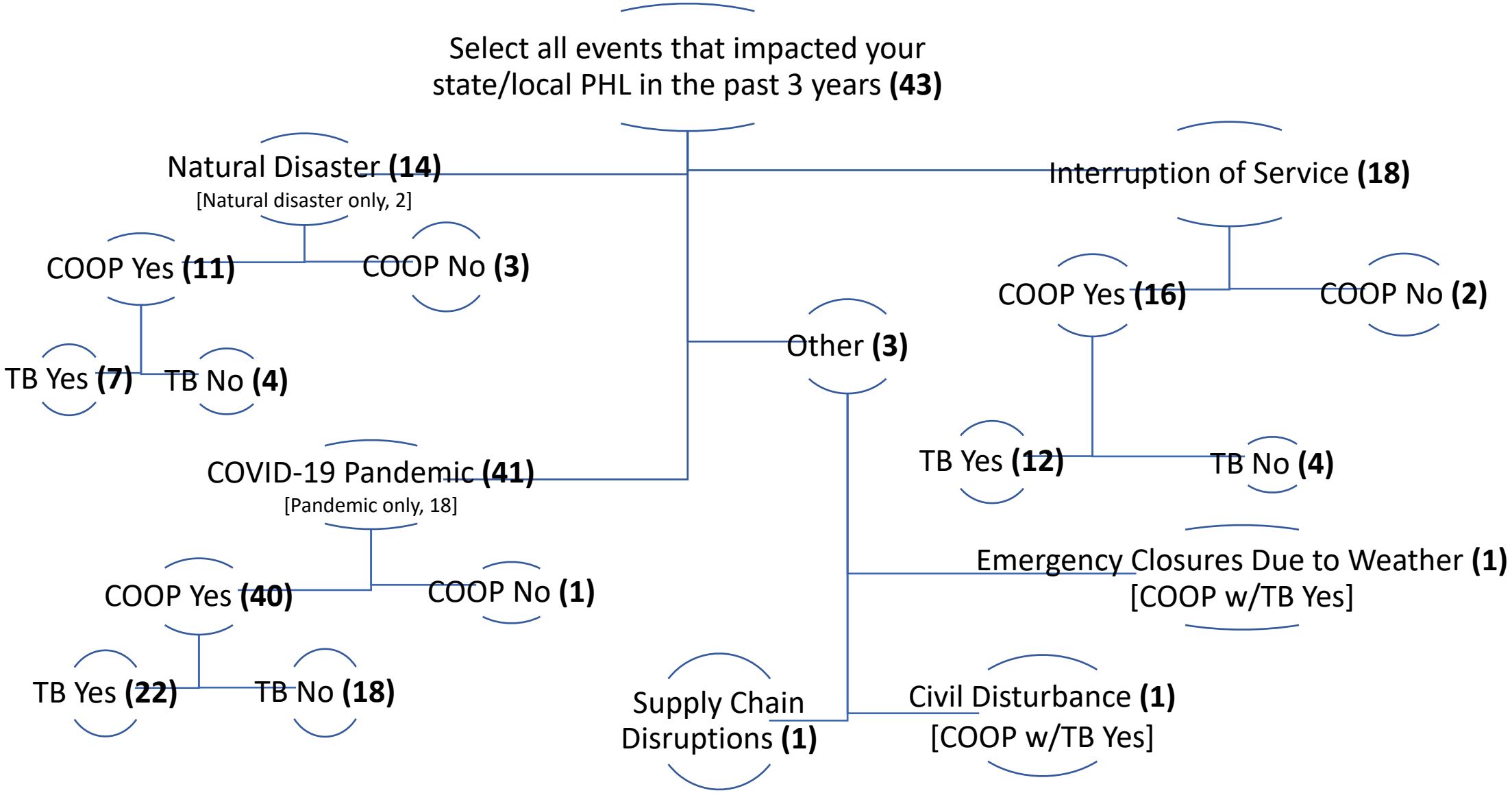
- Developed, approved through CDC's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and distributed CDC RedCap questionnaire to the CDC DTBE Cooperative Agreement PHL awardees
- Downloaded and analyzed questionnaire responses
- Selected focus groups and conducted virtual platform discussions
- Summarized mycobacteriology laboratory COOP details, gaps, and lessons learned
- Drafting a COOP toolkit

Questionnaire Responses/Analysis

- 44/58 (76%) PHLs responded to the survey
- 5 PHLs responded a COOP was not available
- 6 PHLs responded that their PHL COOP did not identify responsible persons to oversee essential functions of each laboratory section/department in case of an emergency event

*Questionnaire completed by mycobacteriology staff

Events Within the Past 3 Years that Affected the PHL as a Whole



Events that Interrupted Mycobacteriology Testing >48 hours (n=24)

Equipment Failure/ Maintenance (n=12)

5 PHLs activated COOP

COVID-19 (n=8)

3 PHLs activated COOP

Facility Issues (n=8)

3 PHLs activated COOP

Winter/Ice Storms (n=7)

Flooding (n=2)

Hurricane (n=2)

Other (n=2)

- Riots
- HPLC media, MycoPrep backordered

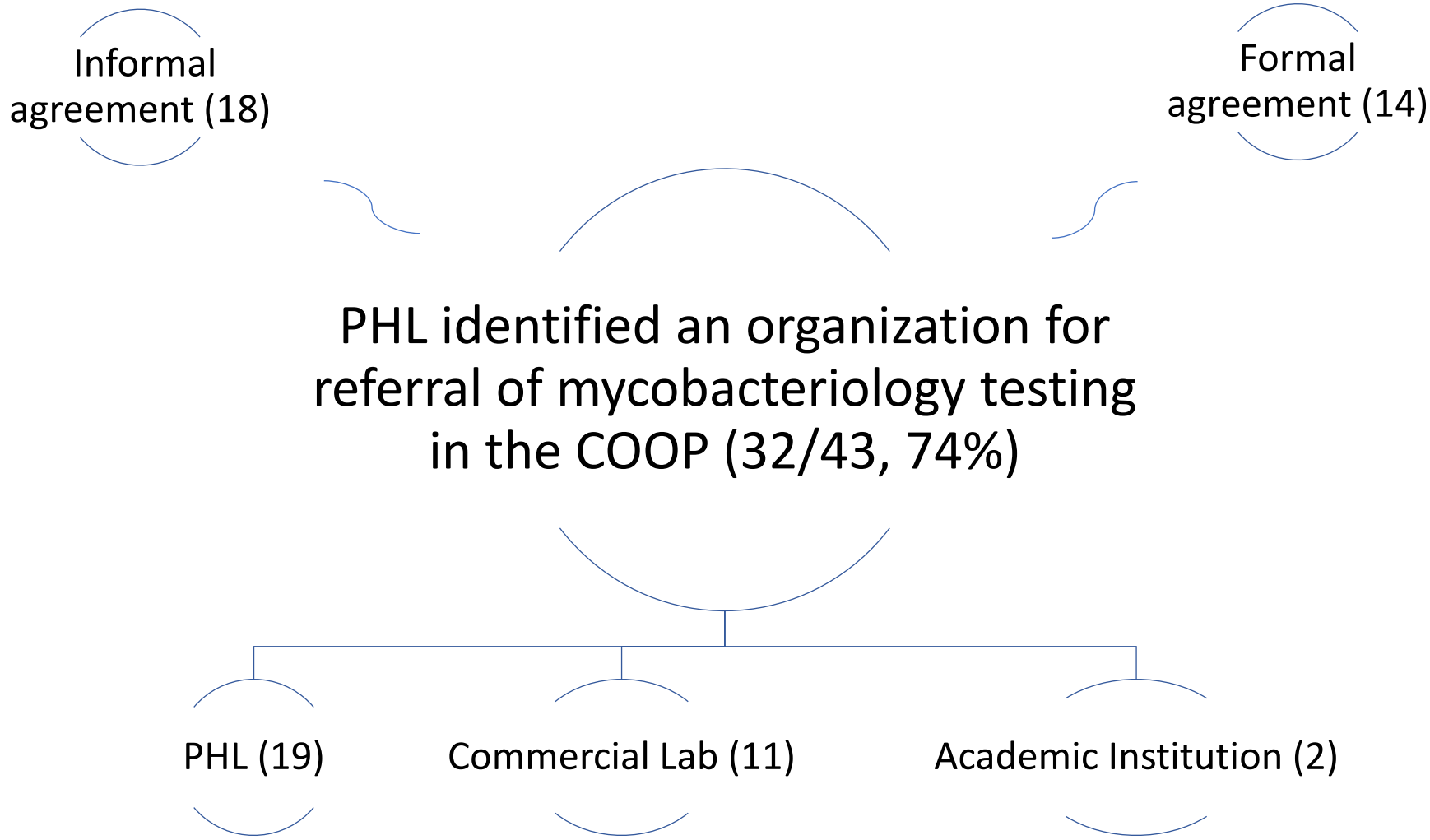
1 PHL activated COOP

Earthquake (n=1)

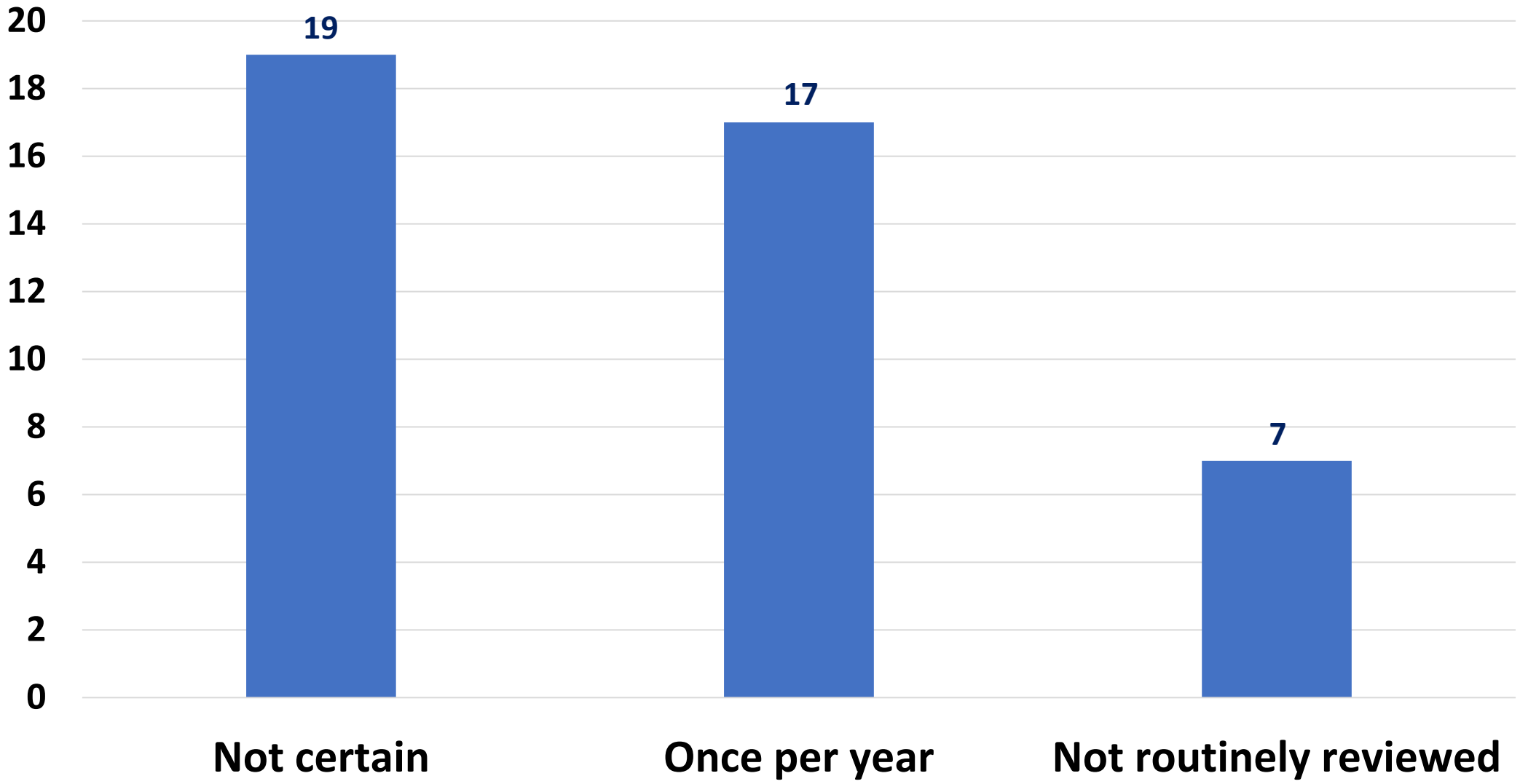
1 PHL activated COOP

Fire (n=1)

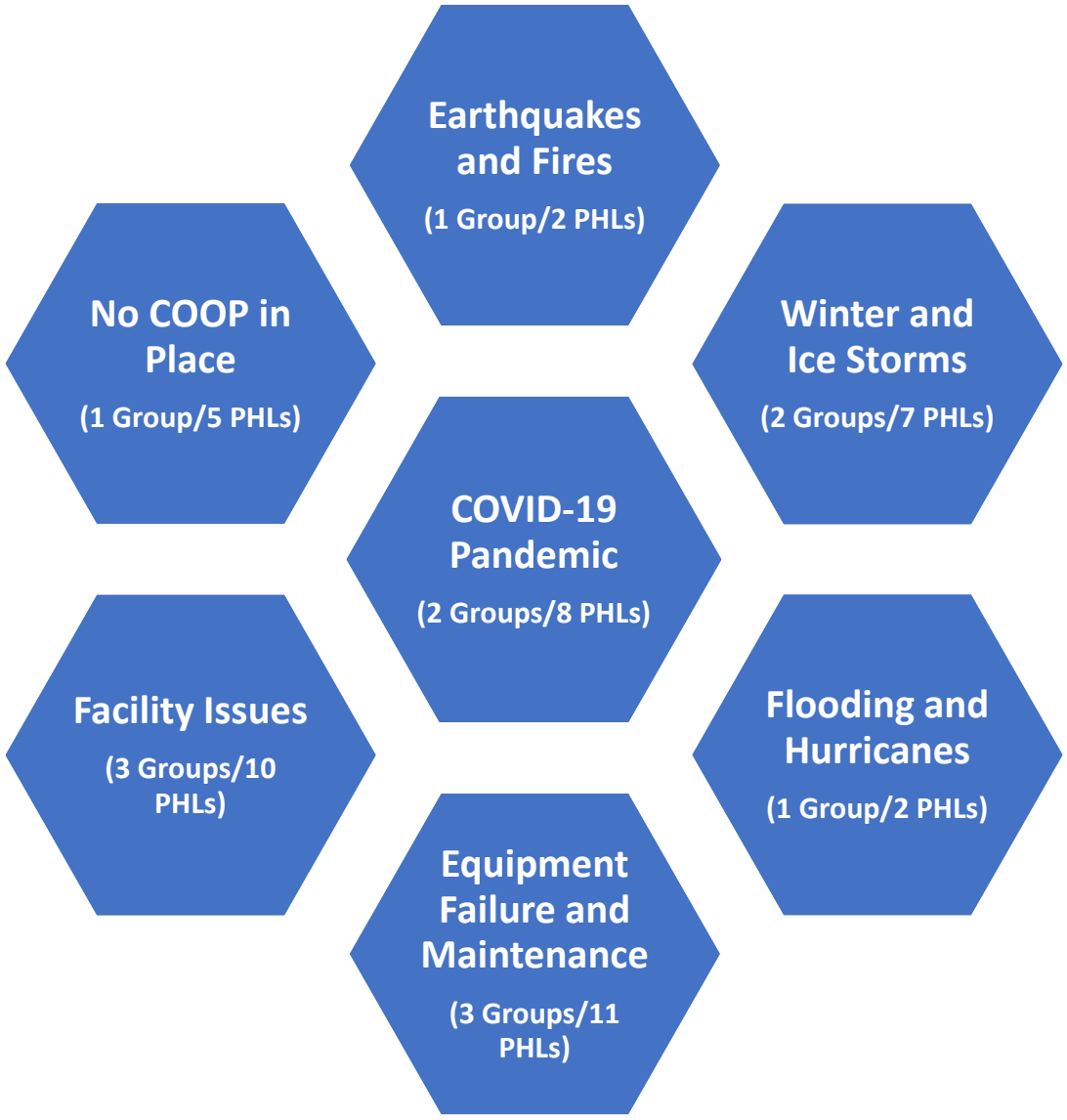
PHL COOP and Referral Testing Availability



Frequency of COOP Review for the Mycobacteriology Laboratory Section (n=43)



Focus Groups Organized by Interruption of Service Events (ISE)



- Conducted in virtual setting
- ISE categories informed by COOP survey
- Interest in participation email sent to PHL survey responders
- ≤ 4 PHLs per group with some events having 2 or more groups
- Focus groups included PHLs with annual specimen volumes of low, medium, and high

Focus Group Discussions

- Questions
  - Type of event and how impacted PHL TB laboratory testing
  - Lessons learned
  - Any revisions to COOP
  - Best practices to prepare for future events
  - Other suggestions

- Outcomes categorized
  - General and best laboratory practices
  - Considerations for planning, before, during, and after an event
    - COOP availability; TB included
    - Referral laboratory plan
    - Submitters/providers
    - Specimens and cultures
    - Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)/reporting
    - Test methods and algorithms
    - Equipment
    - Resources

Potential Outcomes of the Project

- Encourage PHLs to identity a referral laboratory for mycobacteriology testing, if not available
- Communicate the importance of developing a COOP if one is not available
- Develop a resource (toolkit, job aids)
- Draft a manuscript/white paper to highlight importance of COOP for mycobacteriology testing and lessons learned
- Plan a future webinar

PHL TB Panel:
Interruption of Service Events (ISEs) Presentations

PHL Panelists

Jennifer Lemer, MLS(ASCP) CM	• North Dakota Public Health Laboratory
Latricia Lewis	• City of Houston Public Health Laboratory
Lisa Onischuk, MPH, MT(ASCP)	• New Mexico State Public Health Laboratory
Yvette Vergnetti, MT(ASCP)	• Alaska State Public Health Laboratory
Ryan Ortiguerra, PhD	• Washington State Public Health Laboratory

Q & A Session

PHL Panelists & Attendees

Thank you!

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 www.cdc.gov