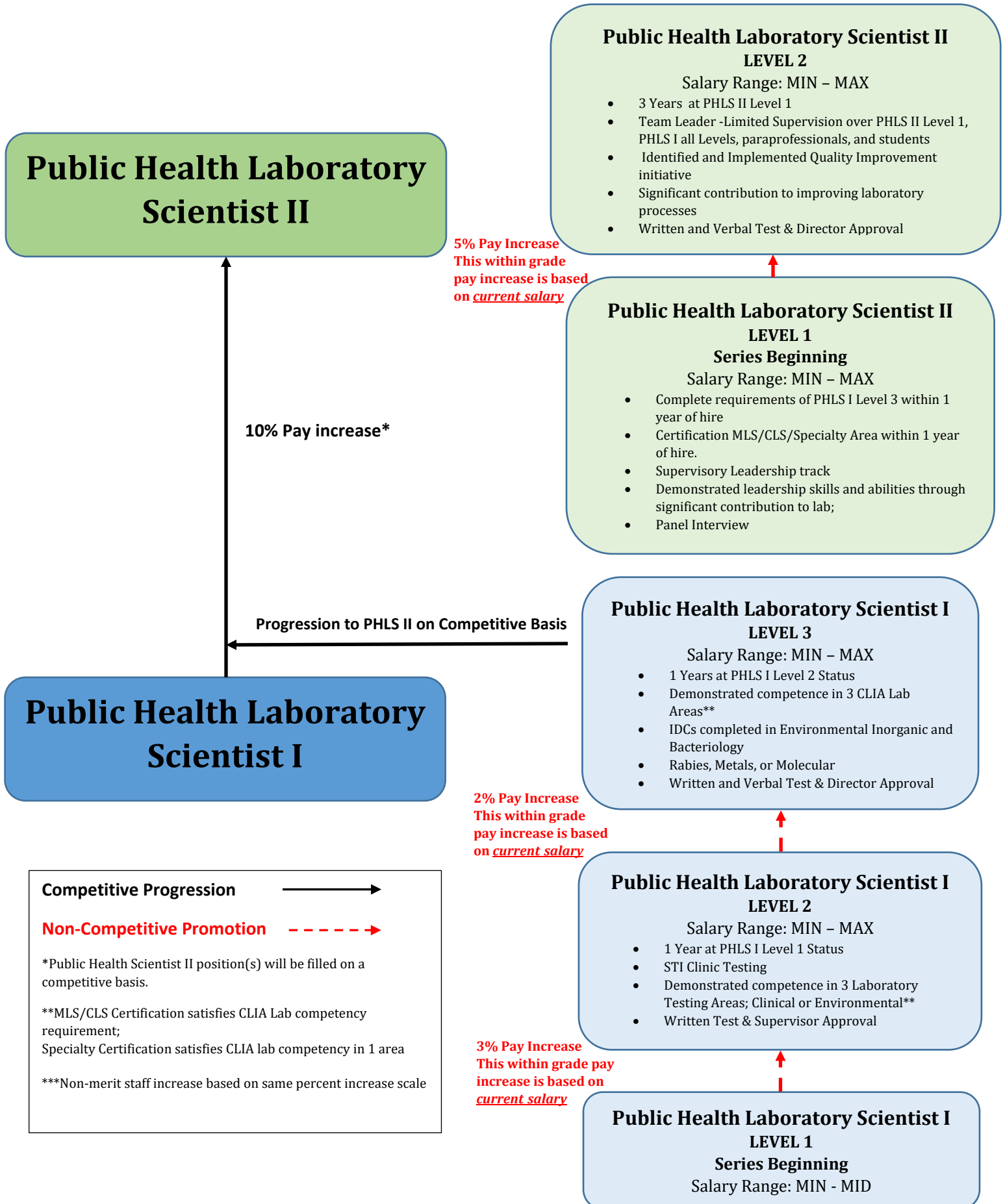


FAIRFAX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT LABORATORY CAREER LADDER FOR UPWARD MOBILITY



	Fairfax County Health Department Laboratory	POLICY#	REVISION #: 3
	Section: PHLS Career Ladder	1723	Page: 1 of 8
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I. PURPOSE:

This policy outlines a defined Upward Mobility Program structure for the Fairfax County Health Department Laboratory (FCHDL) offering career growth and development opportunities for Public Health Laboratory Scientists (PHLS). This policy aligns with the FCHD Laboratory's Mission and Vision Statements and provides a means to improve efficiencies and better meet the laboratory's operational goals and regulatory requirements by utilizing staff to the fullest extent of their capabilities. This program allows staff to realize their full potential while building a healthy team, improving overall morale, and maintaining and improving the Laboratory's Quality System. This Upward Mobility Program provides a mechanism for Public Health Laboratory Scientists to advance their career through multiple pathways. The PHLS I class is an entry level class designed to provide experience and training required to qualify them to perform progressively more complex and advanced analytical testing. The PHLS II class acts as lead scientists and serves as the technical expert in their areas of competence. The progression to this class is competitive and designed to provide advancement for those scientists interested in pursuing a career path in quality assurance and management by providing opportunities for development of leadership and supervisory skills and is intended to provide staff with the required experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities to be competitive for the PHLS III position.

II. DEFINITIONS:

CLIA	Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments – Federal legislation which regulates all U.S. facilities or sites that test human specimens for health assessment or to diagnose, prevent, or treat disease.
Clinical Testing Area	Testing areas which fall under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA). Testing areas include: • Bacteriology • Parasitology • Mycobacteriology • Clinical Chemistry/Toxicology /Urinalysis • Immunology • QuantiFeron Gold Testing • Molecular
Environmental Testing Area	Testing that falls under Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations. • Inorganics • Environmental Bacteriology

	Metals
Non-regulated Testing Area	Testing areas that are not regulated by CLIA - Rabies - Environmental Molecular Testing (Mosquitoes and ticks)
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency – A federal agency that sets forth and enforces rules and standards that protect the environment and control pollution.
Initial Demonstration of Capability (IDC)	Demonstration of ability of an analyst to perform test method for accuracy, precision, and reporting limit.
Proficiency Test	The testing of unknown samples purchased from an approved vendor to verify the accuracy and reliability of its testing, validation of the test processes, and competency of laboratory personnel. After testing, the laboratory reports its results back to the PT program for evaluation and grading. PT scores are sent to the laboratory and to the appropriate regulatory authority for assessment and monitoring of the laboratory's performance. FCHD Laboratory participates in CLIA, CDC, and EPA approved PT programs.
Quality Management System (QMS)	A structured management system documenting organizational activities designed to manage all aspects of the laboratory's operations with regard to quality. The QMS provides a framework to monitor and improve processes, identify problems, and ensure quality throughout the laboratory. The QMS supports the organization's mission and vision by defining the organization's policies and procedures, organizational authority, accountability, and responsibilities.

III. **POLICY:**

The Public Health Laboratory Scientist (PHLS) career path described in this policy is based on the CDC's *Competency Guidelines for the Public Health Laboratory* and is designed to provide a progressive job series of increasing responsibility and expertise. This job series allows for professional growth and development while increasing efficiency and quality of laboratory services provided through Fairfax County Health Department Laboratory (FCHDL).

The career path described in this policy provides an additional level of responsibility and oversight of work, through the addition of the PHLS II class. The PHLS II class serves as lead scientist and technical expert, providing bench level supervision, training, and assessment of PHLS Is, students, volunteers, and paraprofessional staff. Under the guidance of the PHLS III responsibilities may include assigning work priorities in assigned areas, initial review of test results, quality control, proficiency testing, validation/verification of

methods, and the investigation of non-conforming events. The PHLS II ensures staff compliance with the laboratory's quality management system and regulatory requirements.

The career path described below provides for advancement from Public Health Laboratory Scientist I to Public Health Laboratory Scientist II based on established criteria, increasing responsibility, and documented demonstration of knowledge and skills. Personnel requesting non-competitive progressions must meet all the requirements listed in this policy. In addition, all advancements must have final approval from the Director of Laboratory Services.

All PHLS I positions are filled at Level 1 with personnel who meet the minimum requirements as advertised including graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a Bachelor's degree in medical/clinical laboratory science, microbiology, chemistry, or a degree in a directly related field of study.

A. Public Health Laboratory Scientist I Level 1 to Public Health Laboratory Scientist I Level 2

1. Eligibility:

This progression is within grade, includes a 3% pay increase based on current base pay, and must be approved by the Director of Laboratory Services. The PHLS I Level 2 performs laboratory testing and regulatory functions associated with clinical and/or environmental lab testing following prescribed protocols or methods for standardized tests but may exercise independent decision making. Areas of testing will be assigned by Laboratory Management based on the needs of the Laboratory.

➤ To be considered for the progression to PHLS I Level 2, the candidate must:

- Serve a minimum of 1 year in PHLS I Level 1
- Demonstrate competence and have performed STI testing at clinic sites
- Demonstrate competence and have performed routine testing in at least 3 laboratory testing areas, clinical or environmental.
- Successful completion of Proficiency Tests for all parameters in each area of competence.
- Demonstrate ability to operate laboratory instrumentation and associated software programs in areas of assignment.
- Candidates must meet all performance criteria on their most recent Fairfax County Performance Evaluation.
- Pass a written test demonstrating knowledge of basic laboratory concepts, techniques, scientific principles and procedures, operational protocols, specific test methods, good laboratory practices, equipment, and quality control. Passing score is 80%.

2. Procedure:

➤ To initiate progression from PHLS I Level 1 to PHLS I Level 2:

- The PHLS I Level 1 informs PHLS II, in writing that he/she has completed all eligibility requirements for progression to the PHLS I Level 2 and is ready for testing.

- The PHLS II reviews the PHLS I Level 1's documentation of eligibility to determine if the PHLS I Level 1 has met all requirements for progression and is ready for testing.
- Once the PHLS II has determined the PHLS I Level 1 has met and documented all requirements, the PHLS II provides a written statement of eligibility to the PHLS III (supervisor) stating that the PHLS I Level 1 is ready for testing.
- The PHLS III approves request for testing, assigns test date, administers and grades the test.
- The PHLS III notifies the Director of Laboratory Services of the test outcome.

Passing Grade:

- If PHLS I Level 1 receives a passing grade ($\geq 80\%$), the PHLS III approves the progression and informs the Director of Laboratory Services.
- Final approval for progression rests with the Director of Laboratory Services.

Failing Grade:

- If PHLS I Level 1 receives a grade less than 80%, the PHLS III notifies the candidate and schedules a retest.
- If the candidate does not take the test within 3 months of applying, they must submit a new application for testing.
- Final approval for progression rests with the Director of Laboratory Services.

B. Public Health Laboratory Scientist I Level 2 to Public Health Laboratory Scientist I Level 3

1. Eligibility:

This progression is within grade, includes a 2% pay increase based on current base pay, and must be approved by the Director of Laboratory Services. This progression requires the PHLS I Level 2 to develop beyond the general lab duties to more complex testing to include rabies, molecular or metals testing, and achieve certification to package and transport infectious substances, biological samples, and dangerous goods including Category A, Category B, and Exempt Patient Specimens. Areas of testing will be assigned by Laboratory Management based on the needs of the Laboratory.

➤ To be considered for the progression to PHLS I Level 3 the candidate must:

- Meet all requirements of and serve a minimum of 1 year at PHLS I Level 2
- Demonstrate competence and perform testing in:
 - At least 3 CLIA regulated laboratory testing areas
 - Environmental inorganics and bacteriology
 - Metals, Molecular, or Rabies testing
- Successful completion of Proficiency Tests for all parameters in each area of competence.

- Demonstrate ability to operate laboratory instrumentation and associated software programs in areas of assignment.
- Candidates must meet all performance criteria on their most recent Fairfax County Performance Evaluation.
- Pass a written test demonstrating knowledge of advanced laboratory protocols, troubleshooting, documentation, safety practices, quality assurance, ethics, customer service and regulatory standards.
 - Passing score is 80%.
- Pass oral examination administered by PHLS II, PHLS III, and Director of Laboratory Services.
 - Passing score is 80%.

2. Procedure:

- To initiate progression from PHLS I Level 2 to PHLS I Level 3:
 - The PHLS I Level 2 informs PHLS II in writing that he/she has completed all eligibility requirements for progression to the PHLS I Level 3 and is ready for testing.
 - The PHLS II reviews the PHLS I Level 2's documentation of eligibility to determine if the PHLS I Level 2 has met all requirements for progression and is ready for testing.
 - Once the PHLS II has determined the PHLS I Level 2 has met and documented all requirements, the PHLS II provides a written statement of eligibility to the PHLS III (supervisor) stating that the PHLS I Level 2 is ready for testing.
 - The PHLS III notifies the Director of Laboratory Services of the request for progression.
 - The PHLS III approves request for testing, assigns test date, administers and grades the test.
 - The PHLS III notifies the Director of Laboratory Services of the test outcome.

Passing Grade:

- If PHLS I Level 2 receives a passing grade ($\geq 80\%$), the PHLS III schedules a time for an oral examination with PHLS II, PHLS III, and Director of Laboratory Services.

Failing Grade:

- If PHLS I Level 2 receives a grade less than 80%, the PHLS III notifies the candidate and schedules a retest.
- If the candidate does not take the test within 3 months of applying, they must submit a new application for testing.
- Once the candidate passes both the written and oral examinations, the PHLS III signs off on the progression.
- If the candidate fails either the written or oral examination, the PHLS III notifies the candidate and schedules a retest.
- Final approval for progression rests with the Director of Laboratory Services.

C. Public Health Laboratory Scientist II Level 1**1. Eligibility:**

Advancement to this class is through Fairfax County's competitive process as positions become available. This class requires the PHLS to advance beyond the general laboratory testing duties to more advanced testing and development of leadership and supervisory skills required to provide oversight of the work performed by PHLS I, paraprofessionals, and students. Areas of testing and oversight will be assigned by Laboratory Management based on the needs of the Laboratory.

➤ To be considered for the PHLS II Level 1 class the candidate must:

- Possess a minimum of 4 years' recent relevant experience performing high complexity testing in a clinical or public health laboratory;
- Meet requirements of PHLS I Level 3 within 1 year of hire;
- Possess certification in one of the following within 1 year of hire: Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS), Clinical Laboratory Scientist (CLS), Medical Technologist (MT), or specialty area through a nationally recognized laboratory accreditation organization;
- Demonstrate leadership qualities (initiative, responsibility, motivation, effective communication) through significant contribution(s) to laboratory programs such as:
 - Identifying quality initiatives;
 - Participating and leading team projects;
 - Participating in the training and development of staff;
 - Active participation on Quality Assurance Committee or Safety Committee;
 - Participate in investigation of Nonconforming Events;
 - Prepare and deliver in-service presentations to staff;

2. Procedure:

➤ To apply for the PHLS II class, candidates must submit their application through the Fairfax County NeoGov system. Once candidates are certified as qualified by the county the selected applicants will be invited to a formal panel interview.

After all applicant interviews have been completed, the panel will score the applicants following Fairfax County hiring policies and select the most qualified applicant.

D. Public Health Laboratory Scientist II Level 1 to Public Health Laboratory Scientist II Level 2**1. Eligibility:**

This within grade progression includes a 5% pay increase, based on the employee's current base pay and must be approved by the Director of Laboratory Services. This is the highest level within the Public Health Laboratory Scientist Upward Mobility

Program and indicates a commitment from Fairfax County and the Public Health Laboratory Scientist to continuous improvement of the FCHD Laboratory's quality system, efficiency, personnel development, and improving overall morale to build a healthy and cohesive team. This progression requires the Public Health Scientist to develop and demonstrate leadership and supervisory skills as well as mastering multiple advanced testing procedures and complex laboratory instrumentation. The PHLS II Level 2 serves as lead scientist providing guidance and support to PHLS I. Is providing the first level of work oversight and supervision of subordinate staff. The PHLS II Level 2 have the ability to set work priorities and assign work to lower-level staff according to ability level. The PHLS II Level 2 assists in training of new employees, demonstrating procedures and documentation according to established policies, processes, procedures, and regulatory guidance.

- To be considered for the progression to PHLS II Level 2 the candidate must:
 - Meet all requirements of and serve a minimum of 3 years at PHLS II Level 1;
 - Demonstrate ability to operate laboratory instrumentation and associated software programs including Laboratory Information System (LIS), electronic logbooks, and document control software.
 - Contributed significantly in the training and development of Public Health Laboratory Scientist I (in-service training and presentations);
 - Contributed significantly to the FCHD Laboratory's Quality Program by identification, implementation, and monitoring of at least one Quality Improvement Initiative.
 - Contributed significantly to developing or maintaining a laboratory program such as:
 - Laboratory Safety Committee
 - Laboratory Quality Assurance Committee
 - Internal audits
 - Hazardous Waste Disposal
 - Chemical Inventory
 - Laboratory web page development and maintenance
 - Data analysis spreadsheet and report development
 - Proficiency Testing
 - Training and development of staff
 - Competency assessment
 - Investigation and documentation of nonconforming events
 - Incident Reports
 - Attend discipline specific training and workshops including leadership and supervisory courses related laboratory management.
 - Candidates must meet all performance evaluations on their most recent Fairfax County Performance Evaluation.
 - Pass a written test demonstrating knowledge of advanced laboratory protocols, regulatory requirements, and leadership/supervisory skills. Passing score is 80%.
 - Pass an oral examination administered by the PHLS III and Director of Laboratory Services focused on section specific methods,

instrumentation, regulatory requirements, and leadership/supervisory skills. Passing score is 80%.

2. Procedure:

➤ To initiate progression from PHLS II Level 1 to PHLS II Level 2:

- The PHLS II Level 1 informs PHLS III (supervisor), in writing that he/she has completed all eligibility requirements for progression to the PHLS II Level 2 and is ready for testing.
- The PHLS III reviews the PHLS II Level 1's documentation of eligibility to determine if the PHLS II Level 1 has met all requirements for progression and is ready for testing.
- The PHLS III determines the PHLS II Level 1s eligibility and readiness for advancement through review of the candidate's files including performance, training, and attendance. The candidate must have met all requirements and completed all competencies as described above and meet all performance evaluation categories on their most recent Fairfax County Performance Evaluation.
- The PHLS III provides a written statement of eligibility and readiness for testing and notifies the Director of Laboratory Services of an eligible candidate to be promoted to the Public Health Laboratory Scientist II Level 2.
- Once approval to proceed is obtained from the Director of Laboratory Services, the PHLS III assigns a test date, administers and grades the test.
- The PHLS III notifies the Director of Laboratory Services of the test outcome.

Passing Grade:

- If PHLS II Level 1 receives a passing grade ($\geq 80\%$), the PHLS III schedules a time for an oral examination with PHLS III and Director of Laboratory Services.

Failing Grade:

- If PHLS II Level 1 receives a grade less than 80%, the PHLS III notifies the candidate and schedules a retest.
- If the candidate does not take the test within 3 months of applying, they must submit a new application for testing.
- Once the candidate passes both the written and oral examinations, the PHLS III signs off on the advancement and submits to the Director of Laboratory Services for final approval and signature.
- If the candidate fails either the written or oral examination, the PHLS III notifies the candidate and schedules a retest.
- Final approval for advancement rests with the Director of Laboratory Services.