

OBJECTIVE

APHL and CDC have worked toward Public Health Laboratory (PHL) sustainability for a number of years, most recently through the formal creation of the Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative (LEI) in 2011. Current PHL sustainability work incorporates the evaluation of resources that were released under the LEI, including:

- **A Practical Guide to Assessing and Planning Implementation of Public Health Laboratory Service Changes (2012)**, a resource to aid in preparing for and implementing PHL service changes in response to organizational, financial, and other factors;
- **State Public Health Laboratory Billing: Status Report and Recommendations (2013)**, presents an overview of current PHL billing capacity and examples of successful PHL billing processes; and
- **The Policy Guide for Public Health Laboratory Test Service Sharing (2014)**, for use by PHL directors and their colleagues as they explore legal and other policy questions related to interstate sharing of test services.

METHODS

APHL developed impact evaluations for the three listed resources and sent them to PHL directors to measure the overall usefulness of each guide and to gather recommendations for improvement. A survey on the Practical Guide was distributed in 2013; a combined evaluation for the Billing and Policy Guides was sent in 2015. The evaluations were designed to solicit feedback on: how the guides were used; whether the guides helped in the process of making changes within the laboratory; what information and recommendations were most and least helpful; and what types of information should be included in updated versions.

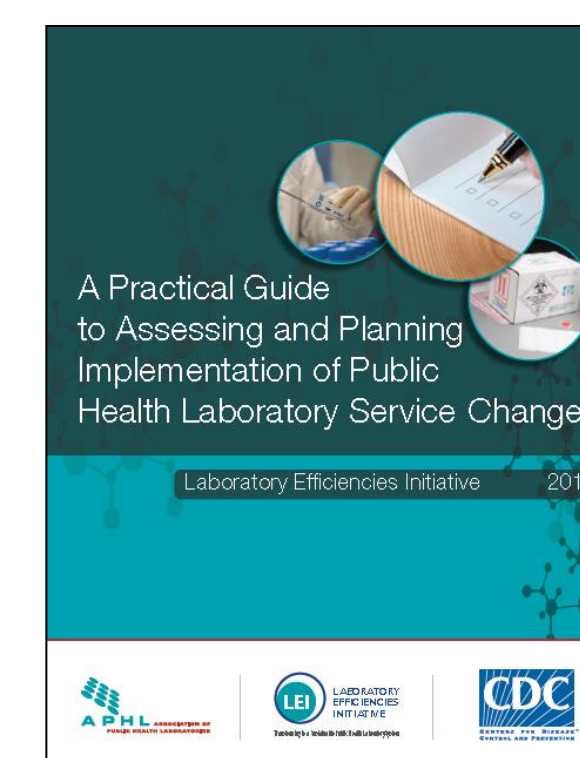
User Feedback

“The Practical Guide was well laid out, detailed, and included examples from the field that I found very useful and informative.”

“The Billing and Policy guides are valuable resources to all Public Health Labs as they assess, and initiate policies and protocols for fee-for-testing services.”

“Additional testing and information is now available to help with better decision making, and our customer satisfaction is enhanced as a result of the laboratory’s service change.”

RESULTS

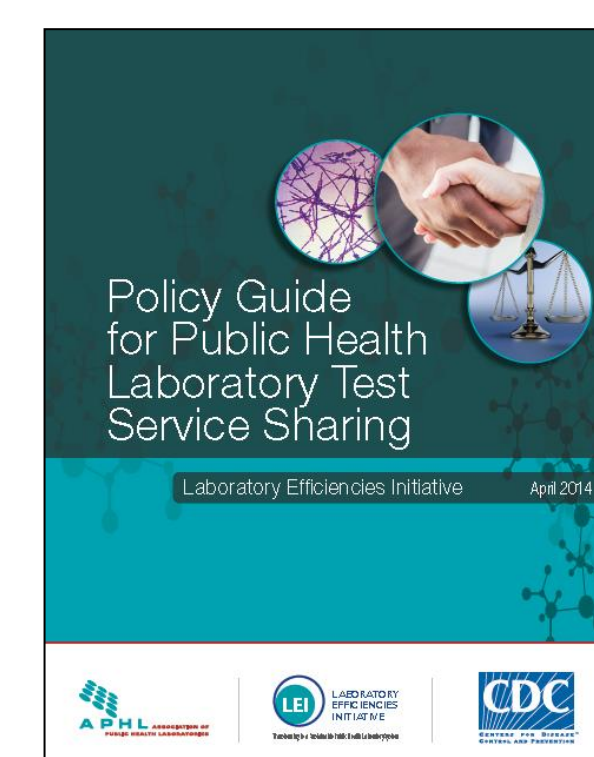
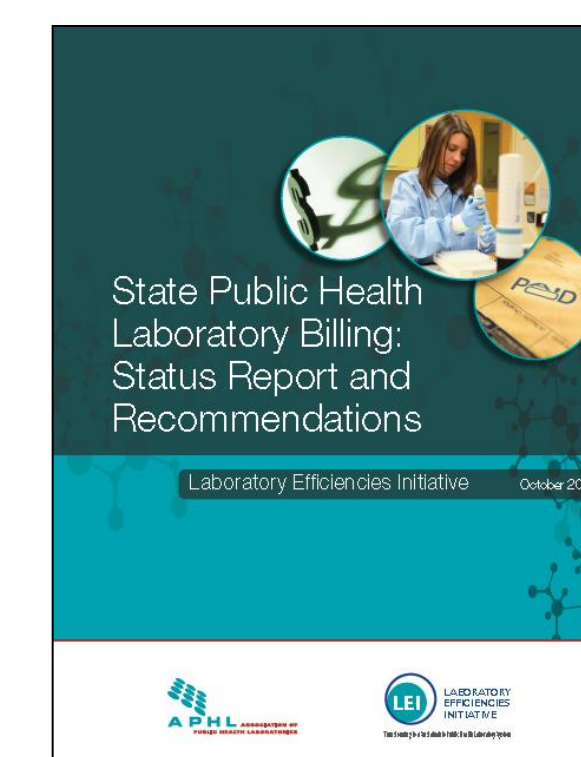


Practical Guide

22 PHLs responded to the Practical Guide survey. 60% of respondents have either used the Practical Guide, or reviewed it for future use. One laboratory reported using the Practical Guide to offer Norovirus sequencing and additional VPD tests by partnering with another PHL.

Billing Guide

24 PHLs responded to the Billing and Policy Guide evaluation. 33% of respondents reported that they will improve or update current billing processes after reviewing the guide. Many of the respondents already bill for services. Of those who do not, 21% will use the guide to assess whether their laboratory can bill for services, and 13% will use it to help with setting up billing for services.



Policy Guide

33% of respondents plan to use the Policy Guide. Of these, 25% plan to use the Guide to assess whether their laboratory can share services; 17% will evaluate current shared services. 13% have already used the guide to create an MOU or contract with another state for sharing test services.

CONCLUSION

PHL sustainability continues to be a priority for APHL and CDC. The evaluation of the Practical Guide, Billing Guide and Policy Guide documented how they were used by APHL member laboratory staff and the impact they had. The suggestions and comments received will help prioritize future tools and guidance, and mold future PHL sustainability activities.

For More Information

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