The biosafety and biosecurity programs at several different PHLs are more harmonized due to their participation in the Peer Network. Due to the success of the first round of participating BSOs and PowerPoint presentation deliverables obtained from the first round of the Peer Network will be used as a common source of guidance. This standardization among different organizations is beneficial in many ways such as implementing new procedures and communication between partners. The trip report and PowerPoint presentation deliverables obtained from the first round of the Peer Network will be utilized to develop targeted training opportunities for BSOs, identify funding gaps and needs, and promote the importance of BSOS in PHLs. Due to the success of the first round of participating BSOS and the demand expressed by other PHLs, APHL has conducted a second round for this Peer Network. The second round of this program has commenced in August 2017 to partner additional PHLs and the site visits are currently underway to foster more harmonization in biosafety and biosecurity programs in public health laboratories.

RESULTS

Utilizing the site visits to their fullest from the initial round, each visiting BSO participated in extensive laboratory tours where they were presented with an overview of the host laboratory facility, introduced to the laboratory director and other laboratory managers and discussed the state-specific biological, chemical, and radiological work performed by the host laboratory. During their site visit, they were able to analyze the current biosafety processes and policies of the host laboratory, evaluate the sentinel laboratory outreach techniques the host BSO utilizes, as well as challenges faced, brainstorm ideas for improvement of internal and external trainings, and identify areas in the host laboratory that could utilize stronger biosecurity measures.

Some notable outcomes and takeaways expressed by the participating BSOS included:

- Shared host BSO during a visit of a nearby sentinel clinical laboratory in order to evaluate outreach techniques (ID visits YVC)
- Worked with host BSO to develop a Train-the-Trainer Biosafety and Biosecurity Workshop for sentinel clinical laboratories at their PHL (LA visits MII)
- Worked with host BSO to develop ideas on improved packing and shipping trainings both in-house and with sentinel clinical laboratories (NC visits IIK)
- Identified the necessity to have a trained observer with laboratory staff during donning and doffing to assist in decontaminating with EPA-certified disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers (GI visits WI)
- Developed strategies for maintaining biosecurity after funding shortages (AZ visits NM)
- Shared with host BSO about BT BSL3 suite's ability to close separately to foster more harmonization in biosafety

Analyzing the trip reports from the 6 twinned labs, we have seen PHLs improve the implementation of their perspective biosafety and biosecurity programs. Labs have initiated changes in their biosecurity plans, donning and doffing procedures, waste management protocols and sentinel laboratory outreach program to name a few seen in Image 2. Finally, this program has used limited resources to strengthen biosafety and biosecurity nationwide as well as fostering an environment of collaboration and community among the relevant stakeholders.

Conclusions

The biosafety and biosecurity programs at several different PHLs are more harmonized due to their common source of guidance. The standardization among different organizations is beneficial in many aspects such as implementing new procedures and communication between partners. The trip report and PowerPoint presentation deliverables obtained from the first round of the Peer Network will be utilized to develop targeted training opportunities for BSOS, identify funding gaps and needs, and promote the importance of BSOS in PHLs. Due to the success of the first round of participating BSOS and the demand expressed by other PHLs, APHL has conducted a second round for this Peer Network. The second round of this program has commenced in August 2017 to partner additional PHLs and the site visits are currently underway to foster more harmonization in biosafety and biosecurity programs in public health laboratories.

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