Empowering Biosafety Officers: Association of Public Health Laboratories Community of Practice

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What is APHL?

- A non-profit, non-governmental US based organization
- Over 900 members from state and local public health laboratories, state environmental and agricultural labs and others federal agencies and academic institutions
- Advocates at the national level to shape public health policy and to secure increased support/resources for member labs
- Provides training, model practices and technical assistance domestically and internationally
Biosafety Charge

• Biosafety and Biosecurity Initiatives
  – Housed under APHL’s Public Health Preparedness and Response Program; cross-organizational approach to strengthen biosafety domestically and globally

• Coordinate national efforts to improve biosafety in PHLs and support outreach to clinical laboratories
  – *CDC Funding: PHLs received $24 million over 3 years with a one-year extension to strengthen internal biosafety and assist clinical labs
  – **CDC Funding: APHL received $2.2 million to serve as a resource for laboratories and coordinate the strengthening biosafety initiatives.

*Domestic Ebola Supplement to Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Diseases (ELC) - Building and Strengthening Epidemiology, Laboratory and Health Information Systems Capacity in State and Local Health Departments
**APHL-CDC Cooperative Agreement Domestic Laboratory Biosafety for Ebola and Other Highly Infectious Diseases
Public Health Laboratory Biosafety Officer (BSO) Technical Knowledge in 2015

How has APHL addressed the needs of BSOs?

- Establish and Maintain the Biosafety Community of Practice
  - Goal: To provide PHL BSOs from state, local, territorial and US Affiliated Pacific Islands (API) with opportunities to network, share ideas and resources to build biosafety and biosecurity skills.
What is a Community of Practice?

Biosafety Community of Practice

- Biosafety Workshops
- Biosafety CoLABorate Communities
- Biosafety Peer Network

- Collaboration between APHL and Safer Behaviors (Sean Kaufman)
- Program extended into Year 3
- 200+ participants, including global community
- Biosafety Officer Leadership Program

Biosafety Technical Workshops

• A series of two-day workshops convenes all BSOs by region
• Recognizing the needs of the newly hired BSOs, APHL provided training on biosafety and biosecurity fundamentals

Technical Workshop Demographics & Curriculum

51 BSOs from 47 PHLS

Curriculum: Risk Assessments, Donning and Doffing, Decontamination, Engineering Controls, Buying into Biosafety and Leadership in Biosafety
Biosafety Leadership Workshops

- A series of four-day workshop convenes all BSOs by region
- Provides a forum which encourages personal and professional growth with the overall goal to strengthen leadership

Leadership Workshops Demographics & Curriculum

- 37 BSOs from 34 PHLs

"Helped focus the biggest challenges facing BSOs and provided opportunities to network and build relationships with peers."
Biosafety and Biosecurity CoLABorate Communities

• **Biosafety and Biosecurity Community**
  - Currently includes PHLs BSOs (~140), Biosafety Outreach Officers, and other pertinent Biosafety personnel

• **Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity Community**
  - Currently includes PHLs BSOs (~180), Biosafety Outreach Officers along with clinical laboratory staff
    - Public Health Lab - 60
    - Private Clinical Lab - 110
    - National Organization - 10
    - Federal Agency - 1

Biosafety Peer Network

• The Network utilizes a twinning concept, pairing BSOs from two PHLs who alternately visit the other’s institution. Laboratories are paired based on responses to an application.
• To date, thirty-six PHLs have been selected and paired – for a total of eighteen pairs.
• Deliverables: Peer Network Posters, PowerPoints, Trip Reports and Lab Culture Podcast
**Takeaways**

1. Highly successful professional development tool
2. Provided BSOs exceptional training and tools where they can perform their duties effectively
3. Network of biosafety professionals in both PHLs and clinical laboratories
4. Created a highly engaged community of biosafety professionals
5. Plan to continue to evolve and build this community

- What resources do you utilize for guidance and assistance with biosafety/biosecurity? **APHL Collaborate Community 94% (n=48)**
- Are you satisfied with the technical assistance received by the APHL Biosafety and Biosecurity program? **Yes 96% (n=50)**

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**Questions?**

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