

Regional Toxicology Liaison - Quarterly Reflection and Progress Report

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Quarter reported: January – April 2022

The Regional Toxicology Liaisons (RTLs) were selected in January 2022. Region 5 is Sabra Jones, Region 7 is Chris Heartsill and Region 9 is Kristen Burke. All RTLs began making contact with the NHTSA Regional Administrators (RA) immediately to establish clear lines of communication. A shared Google Calendar has been created for the RTLs and the RAs in each of the respective Regions have been given viewing access. Also, beginning in January, the Project Manager (PM) and the RTLs have met weekly to discuss progress and other topics relevant to the project. The first priority of each RTL was to establish toxicology laboratory contacts in an effort to create a comprehensive listing of laboratories and individuals involved in impaired driving casework. Once laboratory contacts are established, the RTLs have been reaching out to laboratories in their Region to understand the difficulties the laboratories face and learn of successes the laboratories have had in circumnavigating any funding deficits. Some meetings have been virtual while others have been in-person, which has allowed for laboratory tours.

In addition to the direct work with the forensic laboratories, there have been requests of the RTLs to provide content to a variety of newsletters and other forms of communication for scientific organizations, highway safety partners, law enforcement, and judges. A few of these organizations requesting content for their newsletters include the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, Southwest Association of Toxicology, Midwest Association of Toxicology and Therapeutic Drug Monitoring, and the National Judicial College.

Since the announcement of the project, there have been several requests from highway safety partners to include the RTLs in working groups, task forces, assessments, and other meetings. The RTLs are working to attend every meeting where possible and, if needed, the PM attends and provides the information of the meeting back to the RTL. In addition to meeting and committee attendance, the RTLs reach out to the laboratories in the respective state to ensure they are also aware of the meeting and encourage their involvement. So far, attending stakeholder meetings alongside the laboratories has proven to be very successful in connecting the state laboratory with various groups that otherwise did not know of each other.

The RTLs have received several training requests and the project is working to accommodate them all. If an RTL is unavailable, the PM provides support for the training request. The Society of Forensic Toxicologists is currently vetting a new management system that will allow for on-demand training modules. It is the goal of the RTL project to create basic training videos that can be retained on the SOFT website and available to laboratories on demand. Implementation of SOFT's new management system will occur in late 2022.

The next significant event for the RTLs is a virtual meeting specific to each of their Regions. The meetings will be held June 21 (Region 5), June 22 (Region 7) and June 23 (Region 9). Invitations have been sent to each of the laboratories in those Regions as well as other highway safety partners. A detailed agenda is being drafted and will be disseminated to all invitees in a few weeks.

Please see the Appendix for a full list of activities related to the project

Project challenges:

The RTLs have been very busy in their own Regions establishing clear communication and contacts. In doing so, other Regions not represented in the project have requested assistance. It has been difficult to turn those requests down, it is clear that the current RTLs are not able to provide assistance to those Regions outside of the scope of this project. Where able, the RTLs include laboratories outside of the three Regions in the project but there is a need for more RTLs to accommodate all of the requests.

Appendix

RTL Activities, Q1, 2022

Region 5:

Past Activities:

March 22 - Prosecuting the Drugged Driver-Michigan
April 11 - Emerging Drug Scientific Working Group-Ohio
April 6 - New England Area Toxicologists

Upcoming events:

April 25-28 - Indiana Highway Traffic Safety Conference
May 19 - Current Trends in Forensic Toxicology Symposium
Region 5 Oral Fluid Summit, TBD

Region 7

Past Activities:

March 2, 2022 – Met with Region 7 Administrators and Regional Program Managers, JOL, and LEL (virtual)
March 21, 2022 – Met with State of Kansas laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
March 22, 2022 – Region 7 All State Conference Meeting, will occur monthly on the last Tuesday of the month (virtual)
March 24, 2022 – RTL Introduction with National Advanced Driving Simulator (virtual)
March 31, 2022 – Met with State of Arkansas laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
April 4, 2022 – Quarterly LEL conference call (virtual)
April 7, 2022 - Met with State of Iowa laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
April 11-13, 2022 – GTSB Impaired Driving Program Assessment (State of Iowa) (virtual)
April 13, 2022 – Arkansas Impaired Driving Prevention Task Force (in person)

Upcoming events:

April 18, 2022 - Meet with State of Arkansas laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
April 21 – NHTSA Regional Operations and Program Delivery Monthly Conference (virtual)
April 25-27, 2022 – Region 7 State Partners Meeting (in-person)
April 28-29, 2022 – On-site visit with the State of Kansas Laboratories (in-person)
May 3, 2022 - Meet with State of Missouri laboratory representatives and state stake holders (Traffic Safety Office, administrators, TSRP, etc). (virtual)
May 20, 2022 – Missouri Impaired Driving Subcommittee Meeting (virtual)

June 22, 2022 NHTSA Region 7 Laboratories Meeting with laboratory representatives and state stakeholders (virtual)

July 27-29, 2022 – NASID Conference 2022 (in-person)?

August 18, 2022 - Springfield Mo. Attend annual Law Enforcement Officers and Chiefs sponsored by the Federal Prosecutors Office. (in-person)

August 21-23, 2022 – IACP Impaired Driving and Traffic Safety Conference (in-person)?

Future Activities Planned:

Schedule visits individually with laboratories both in person and virtual

Region 9

Past Activities:

April 6 - April 7th – NHTSA Region 9 Partner’s Meeting, presented on RTL’s Project

Upcoming Events:

Late April or Early May

Setting meetings/visits with

CA Office of Traffic Safety

AZ Governor’s Office of Highway Safety

HI Department of Transportation

American Samoa Department of Public Safety

Guam Department of Public Works

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

June 23rd – 11 am PST – 2 pm PST

NHTSA Region 9 -Laboratories Meeting – including traffic safety stakeholders

June 27th-July 29th

AZ Prosecutors and Law Enforcement Conference