

Regional Toxicology Liaison – Yearly Reflection and Progress Report

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Timeframe reported: October 2023 – September 2024

The last year for the Regional Toxicology Liaisons (RTL) was busy and filled with several trainings, engagements, and presentations.

Testimony training continued in the final quarter of 2023. The table below summarizes October 2023 to September 2024, including future training. The training continues to be well received. The inclusion of the Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) State Coordinator or designee, a Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) or designee, and an individual from the judiciary such as a Judicial Outreach Liaison (JOL) has increased communication for the laboratories to highway safety partners. As of September 30, 2024, the RTLs have trained over 300 analysts and 60 laboratories. Responsibility.org provided funding for the training again in the last year.

Oct 2023 – Sept 2024 RTL Testimony Training and upcoming events

Training Date	Training Location	# of Attendees	# of Labs Present	States in Attendance
November, 15, 2023	Madison, WI	44 toxicologists	5	Wisconsin
May 12-13, 2024	St. Paul, MN	32 toxicologists, 1 attorney	4	Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa
July 11-12, 2024	Portland, OR	25-30 (2 day training, some attended day one and not the other)	Oregon State Police Lab	Oregon
August 20-22, 2024	Sacramento, CA	15 (included a wet lab on day 1)	3 – Cal DOJ, Sac Regional Lab, BFS Toxicology	California
August 26-27, 2024	Mesa, AZ	30 toxicologists, 2 TSRPs, 1 DRE	2 – Mesa PD and AZ Dept of Safety	Arizona
October 3-4, 2024	Missoula, MT*	17 toxicologists	3 – Montana State Lab, NMS, Idaho State Lab	Montana, Idaho
December 5-6, 2024 (CAT training with RTL assistance)	San Diego, CA	Future Training		

*Laboratory currently not in the RTL regions

In October 2024, the RTLs for R7 and R5 attended and presented at the annual SOFT conference. The focus of the presentation was to report on the work of the SOFT Toxicology Resource Committee (TRC), providing feedback from laboratories across the country. Over 150 laboratories were queried, and we received 96 responses from separate laboratories. Thirty-seven percent of laboratories test blood

specimens while 37% test either urine only or a combination of blood and urine. Forty-seven percent of laboratories continue to utilize a stop testing workflow, meaning when the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and/or illicit substance is detected at a certain concentration, comprehensive drug testing is not performed. The reasons for stop testing varied among the laboratories, some are in place due to workload, and others are directed by policy or statute. The RTLs will continue to work with the laboratories in their regions to understand why stop testing occurs and find ways to provide support and resources. There have been requests to publish the outcomes from this work, and the RTLs will work with the TRC to write a publication that will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.

One of the goals for the RTL program in 2024 is to provide training for forensic toxicology laboratories on drug testing method development and validation. This has been the most often requested training topic by the laboratories. For three days, March 26-28, 2024, the RTLs held a four-hour training each day. Day one focused on the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) Standards Board (ASB) documents. The ASB standards [036](#), Standard Practices for Method Validation in Forensic Toxicology, [017](#), Standard Practices for Measurement Traceability in Forensic Toxicology and [056](#), Standard for Evaluation of Measurement Uncertainty in Forensic Toxicology were presented. Details on the documents, as well as guidance for implementation, were discussed. Day two went into greater detail with laboratory experiences on how they've developed methods and insight to streamline the process for greater efficiency. The second half of day 2 was spent in breakout rooms with each LCMSMS vendor. There, laboratories could ask specific questions unique to their instrumentation and gain insight into troubleshooting and testing strategies. Finally, day 3 covered High Resolution Mass Spectrometry (HRMS), as many laboratories are now acquiring instruments such as Quadrupole Time of Flight Mass Spectrometry (QToF). The second half of day 3 was similar to day 2, however, the focus of the breakout sessions was QToF instrumentation. There were approximately 70 attendees daily, and the presentations and breakout sessions were recorded. Those in laboratories outside NHTSA regions 5, 7, and 9 or who could not attend the workshop can access the recorded link. Feedback from the three-day workshop has been highly positive, with requests to continue the breakout sessions in the future. The RTLs are working with SOFT to create a discussion board on the SOFT website to facilitate discussions and determine the best way to continue the method development and validation training.

In April 2024, the RTLs had the opportunity to attend and present during the annual Lifesavers conference. Before the conference, the RTLs were invited to participate in a meeting of the JOLs, TSRPs, and LELs. This was an incredible opportunity for the RTLs to introduce the program to other highway safety partners and learn from others the role they play in impaired driving prevention. Lifesavers is not a typical meeting for toxicologists to attend. However, the consensus after the conference was for the RTLs to promote the meeting to laboratories and see if highway safety offices will provide travel assistance.

AllRise has requested the RTLs' assistance in updating their best practices manual, specifically the testing portion. In addition, Burke (R9 RTL) attended a portion of the annual AllRise conference held in California. This allowed the RTLs to learn more about AllRise and understand how the two groups can successfully collaborate in the future. At the end of June, the RTLs attended a train the trainer with AllRise and found this to be beneficial. There are several areas the RTLs will be able to assist and collaborate with AllRise. The RTLs will be meeting regularly with AllRise to begin reviewing the best practices document and discuss other opportunities.

During the last three months, the RTLs have continued to provide testimony training to laboratories in their regions and beyond. In addition to the testimony training, the RTLs held a virtual training in July.

The training covered interesting cases presented by toxicologists in Regions 5, 7 and 9. Discussions on how to interpret drug impaired driving cases occurred along with details on how to handle inhalant cases and the complexities they bring. The training was attended by over 50 toxicologists and the recording was provided to laboratories to distribute to those that could not attend.

RTL Chris Heartsill chose to convene toxicology partner meetings in 2024 which are funded by Responsibility.org. In August, the first meeting was held in Missouri. Attendees included toxicologists, representatives from NHTSA Region 7, public health, TSRPs, and the judiciary. Law enforcement was invited and agreed to attend. However, they did not appear. Many in the room had not met before, and this provided an excellent opportunity for collaboration and engagement. Three themes emerged from the meeting:

1. Communication - both ways to/from the lab to/from the courts and law enforcement
2. Funding - the laboratory lacks space and personnel
3. Training - the judiciary and the TSRPs would like more toxicology training

Heartsill is drafting a final report with deliverables from the meeting and it will be distributed when finalized. This information will be shared with the Missouri SHSO to discuss how to achieve the deliverables and further partner in the future.

Project challenges:

Requests for assistance from non-represented regions continue to occur. The RTLs and the Project Manager (PM) work to provide guidance to the extent they are able. With the program expanding, the RTLs will work to incorporate more laboratories into the program.

Not all laboratories have implemented the ASB guidelines and standards. This will be addressed in 2025, as standardization is key to creating a cohesive highway safety testing network. Method development and validation continue to be a bottleneck to standardized testing.

As always, the Buy America Act continues to hamper efforts to procure much-needed testing instrumentation using highway safety funding. The DUID Toolkit and related funding provided by NHTSA was very useful, but further funding and unique ways to circumvent the BAA are required.

Future goals:

Standardization continues to be the primary goal for the RTLs. Discussions with Responsibility.org have begun to address this. There may be an opportunity to provide laboratories with method development and validation assistance.

Several requests have been made for leadership training. The RTLs are working with the Association of State Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD) to provide a webinar series in 2025 on leadership, conflict resolution and anti-burnout.

Testimony training will continue on an ongoing basis. Some laboratories have asked for additional training and others have not been able to schedule the training due to various time constraints. The RTLs will ensure that the remaining laboratories in their regions receive the training.

Data harmonization continues to be a need. However, standardization must occur first. Throughout 2024, the RTLs will look to highway safety partners to understand the gaps in data and assist where necessary to build resources.

Finally, with the impending expansion of the RTL program, new states will be brought on board and testimony training, guidance and other assistance will be provided. The RTLs are looking forward to expanding into new states.

See Appendix for full list of activities and financial report

Appendix

RTL Activities Oct 2023 – Sept 2024

R5 Activities:

Recurring:

RTL weekly meetings – Wednesday each week.

Minnesota DWI Taskforce–Monthly

Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety Staff Meeting – Monthly

Illinois Impaired Driving Task Force Meeting – Monthly

Illinois Forensic Science Commission – Monthly

Illinois Forensic Science Commission Public Policy Subcommittee – Monthly

Wisconsin Impaired Driving Work Group – Quarterly

Michigan Governor’s Traffic Safety Advisory Commission – Quarterly

National Safety Council – Alcohol Drug and Impairment Division – Model DUI Law meeting - No set time or date.

National Safety Council – Alcohol Drug and Impairment Division – Cannabis in Safety Sensitive Positions – Meet every two weeks

National Safety Council – Alcohol Drug and Impairment Division – Cannabis Section – Monthly

National Safety Council – Alcohol Drug and Impairment Division –Position Statement on Adoption of Consensus-Based Standards and Laboratory Accreditation – No set time or date.

Academy Standards Board – Toxicology Consensus Body – Monthly

Organizational Scientific Area Committees (OSAC)/Academy Standards Board Leadership Meetings – Monthly

Academy Standards Board – Toxicology Consensus Body Working Group Technical Report Terms and Definitions- No set time or date.

Academy Standards Board – Toxicology Consensus Body Working Group BPR 037-Guidelines for Opinions and Testimony in Forensic Toxicology- No set time or date.

Academy Standards Board – Toxicology Consensus Body Working Group 173 Standard for Education and Training of Forensic Toxicology Personnel –Weekly Meetings

Forensic Science Oversight Board Meeting (MA) – Monthly

RecoveryOhio Drug Trends Meeting – Monthly

2024 Midwest Traffic Safety Conference Planning Meetings– Monthly

Midwest Toxicology Collaborative Meetings– Quarterly

Single event:

National Judicial College 2023 Indiana City & Town Judges Conference– Indianapolis, IN October 12-13, 2023

New England Forensic Drug Chemists Annual Meeting- Concord, NH October 24, 2023

NSC ADID Meeting – Virtual, October 29, 2023

Society of Forensic Toxicologists annual meeting (Presenter) – Denver, CO, October 29-November 3, 2023

Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists Annual Meeting (Session Chair and Presenter) – Mystic, CT, November 8-10, 2023

Wisconsin Testimony Training – Madison, WI, November 15, 2023

RTL Q1 Quarterly Meeting-Virtual, January 16, 2024

Region 5 JOL/TSRP Meeting - Presenting on Marijuana-Virtual, January 22, 2024
Michigan's Prosecuting Attorneys Association Presentation "Advanced OWI Prosecutions-Toxicology", February 15, 2024
Michigan's Traffic Safety Summit and Michigan State Police Toxicology Laboratory Visit, Lansing, MI, March 11-13, 2024
Michigan Post DWI Deaths and Toxicology Data Meeting, March 18, 2024
Michigan's Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission Meeting, March 19, 2024
RTL Method Validation Training – Virtual, March 26-28, 2024
Current Trends in Forensic Toxicology Symposium (Chair of Scientific Sessions)–Virtual, May 20-24, 2024
Michigan State Police OHSP Impaired Driving Program Meeting–Virtual, April 3, 2024
Society of Forensic Toxicology, Open Committee Meeting–Virtual, April 3, 2024
Midwest Association of Toxicology and Therapeutic Drug Monitoring–Chicago, IL, April 4-5, 2024
NHTSA Joint Meeting TSRPs/JOLs/LELs LifeSavers – Denver, Colorado, April 6, 2024
LifeSavers "Expanded Thinking Inside & Outside the Tox Box" – Denver, Colorado, April 8, 2024
Indiana Spring Judicial College "Cosmic Caution: Impaired Driving Program-Part One Toxicology" – Indianapolis, Indiana, April 8, 2024
Northeastern Area Toxicology Meeting – Maynard, MA, May 6, 2024
NHTSA Regional Toxicology Liaison Program, 2024 National TSRP Conference – Grand Rapids, MI, May 9, 2024
Stop Testing Practices in R5 (Request from Martin Boyes), May 15, 2024
Region 5 JOL/TSRP/LEL Quarterly Meeting Presentation "Tox Testing: Location of Sample Collection" – Virtual, May 20, 2024
National Safety Council Impairment Advisory Board Spring Meeting – Virtual, May 29, 2024
Minnesota RTL Testimony Training – St. Paul, MN June 12-13, 2024
Illinois Forensic Science Commission Meeting – Virtual, June 18, 2024
AllRise Train the Trainer– Alexandria, VA, June 24-25, 2024
National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving Mental Health Session Planning-July 1, 2024
Illinois Toxicology Stakeholder Planning Meetings-July 8, 2024, July 29, 2024, August 20, 2024, September 11, 2024
Oregon RTL Testimony Training – July 11-12, 2024
Illinois Impaired Driving Task Force Meeting – July 12, 2024
Michigan Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan Toxicology for Prosecutors Training: "ANSI ASB 037: Guidelines for Opinions and Testimony in Forensic Toxicology or Why can't we say that?" and "Toxicology in Impaired Driving Cases" Presentations –Mt. Pleasant, MI, July 17, 2024
Missouri Law Enforcement Traffic Safety Advisory Council (LETSAC) Conference –Columbia, MO, July 23-24, 2024
RTL Quarterly Meeting – Virtual, July 30, 2024
California Surveillance Study Results, Dr. Chenoweth UC Davis – Virtual, July 30, 2024
SOFT Webinar Smith v Arizona Planning Meeting – Virtual, August 9, 2024, September 11, 2024
Minnesota DWI Task Force Meeting – Virtual, August 9, 2024
SOFT Toxicology Resource Committee Planning Meeting – Virtual, August 15, 2024
Wisconsin Impaired Driving Working Group Meeting – Virtual, August 19, 2024
Ohio Supreme Court Probation Training Meeting – Virtual, August 19, 2024
California Department of Justice RTL Testimony Training – August 20-21, 2024
AllRise, Standard VII Advisory Meeting – August 23, 2024
Arizona RTL Testimony Training, Mesa, AZ– August 25-27, 2024
Minnesota DWI Task Force Data Subcommittee Meeting – August 28, 2024

Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists Annual Meeting (Toxicology Session) Planning Meetings – August 29, 2024, September 9, 2024, September 20, 2024

The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT) Annual Meeting, St. Gallen, Switzerland
Self Funded – September 2-6, 2024

“Psilocybin, Microdosing and Impairment Risk”, TIAFT Annual Meeting, St. Gallen, Switzerland, – September 5, 2024

Forensic Science Education Program Accreditation Pre-Assessment Meeting – September 10, 2024

Forensic Science Education Program Accreditation Onsite Assessment of Duquesne University Pittsburgh, PA – September 17-19, 2024

National Safety Council’s Alcohol, Drugs, and Impairment Division Resource Committee Meeting – September 20, 2024

Region 5 JOL, sJOL, TSRP, SHSO, RTL Meeting – September 23, 2024

Illinois Toxicology Stakeholder Meeting, Springfield, IL – September 24, 2024

SOFT Toxicology Resource Committee “Funding Forensics” Webinar Virtual – September 25, 2024

NHTSA Study Develop and Test Drug-Positive Driving Detection Cues -Linking Toxicology Results and Impaired Driving Arrest Reports Meeting Virtual – September 26, 2024

R7 Activities:

Recurring:

RTL weekly meetings – Wednesday each week.

R7 Monthly State conference call – Last Tuesday each month

National Safety Council – Alcohol Drug and Impairment Division - Executive Board – Secretary, member of Administrative Committee.

Society of Forensic Toxicologists – monthly Board of Directors Meetings (Secretary)

Additional SOFT Activities include – Chair of Membership Committee, Chair of Policies and Procedures Committee, Member of the Finance Committee, Member of the Toxicology Resource Committee, Co-Editor of ToxTalk

OSAC Toxicology Subcommittee Monthly meetings

Additional OSAC work includes participation on the Alcohol Standard Methods subcommittee.

AAFS Academy Standards Board – Working on committee updating document ASB 017 Measurement Traceability, Working on committee publishing document ASB 122 Alcohol Calculations.

Midwest Toxicology Collaborative – Round Table – monthly meetings

NASID Conference Planning Committee – scheduled meetings to plan 2024 meeting

Single event:

Presenter Southwester Association of Forensic Scientists – Houston, Texas, October 2, 2023

2023 Annual DWI Workgroup Meeting (TIRF) – Minneapolis, MN, October 23-25, 2023

National Safety Council Alcohol, Drugs, and Impairment Division Annual Meeting – Denver, CO, October 29, 2023

Society of Forensic Toxicologists Annual Meeting (Presenter) – Denver, CO, October 30-Nov 3, 2023

Presenter – SOFT TRC Survey Results

Wisconsin Testimony Training – November 15, 2023

Missouri Impaired Driving Subcommittee Meeting – November 17, 2023

Assessing Impaired Driving Trends Using Comprehensive Testing and a Multistate Approach – Speaker, The Center for Forensic Science Research & Education Webinar, December 6, 2023

Planning and Coordination meeting for continued Testimony Training Curriculum – ongoing with RTL Meetings

American Academy of Forensic Sciences Meeting, Denver, CO, February 19-23, 2024
Moderator of Scientific Session – Friday, February 23, 2024

National Safety Council Division Meeting – Denver, CO, February 18, 2024

Missouri Impaired Driving Subcommittee Meeting – February 9, 2024

Nebraska Traffic Safety Conference – February 26-29, 2024

Virtual Meetings with all R7 laboratories – March 1, 4, 2024

Method Development and Validation Webinar – All region's laboratories March 26-28, 2024

Planning and Coordination meeting for continued Testimony Training Curriculum – ongoing with RTL Meetings to include Minnesota, Arizona, Oregon, California Department of Justice, and Montana.

OSAC Toxicology Subcommittee Annual in-person meeting – Indianapolis, IA, April 1-5, 2024

TSRP, JOL, LEL, RTL Meeting – Denver CO, April 6, 2024

Lifesavers Conference – Denver, CO, April 7-9, 2024

International Association of Chemical Testing Conference – Presenter, La Jolla, CA, April 22-26, 2024

NHTSA Region 7 Partners Meeting – Presenter, Des Moines, IA, May 13-15, 2024

SOFT Executive Committee in-person Meeting – Scottsdale, AZ, June 16-19, 2024

AllRise, Train the Trainer in-person Meeting – Alexandria, VA, June 24-26, 2024

Missouri State Toxicology Assessment, Jefferson City, MO – August 6, 2024

California Department of Justice Alcohol and Testimony Training, Sacramento, CA – August 20, 2024

Arizona Testimony Training – August 26-27, 2024

Judicial Education Conference (speaker), San Antonio, TX – September 3-5, 2024

GHSA Conference, Indianapolis, IN – September 8-11, 2024

Nebraska State Judicial Conference (speaker), LaVista, NE – September 16-17, 2024

Toronto DRE Conference (speaker), Toronto, Canada – September 24-26, 2024

R9 Q4 Activities

Recurring:

Weekly RTL Meetings

Monthly Meetings with NHTSA R9

Various emails with lab staff (ten labs) within R9

Various email communication with the RTL Group

Document preparations for RTL Group

CA Impaired Driving Task Force March, May, and Nov 8th are intermittent.

CA Impaired Driving Task Force Subcommittee Meetings: Prevention Subcommittee (Chair) and Screening, Assessment and Treatment Subcommittee

Single Event:

October 2023

6th - MN Toxicology Presentation

10th – NADs Workshop brainstorm meeting

13th – Met with Debora from MIT to go over the tox presentation from the SOT MN Meeting

National Safety Council Alcohol, Drugs, and Impairment Division Annual Meeting – Denver, CO, October 29, 2023

November 2023

15th – WI Testimony Training
16th – Meeting with Retired Chief Helena Williams (CHP)
16th - Meeting with Chief Kevin Davis CHP
20th - PPT prep for CAT and submission
21st - Coordinated meetings between Chris H and CA DOJ
30th – TRC Meeting
30th – Meeting with Chief Kevin Davis (CHP)
Coordinated meetings between Chris H and CA DOJ

December 2023

3-5 CAT Meeting – Presentation on Dec 4th
OTS-NHTSA in-Person holiday parties
20th – Meeting with Chris H regarding CA DOJ
Communications with speakers for Method Development and Validation Training

January - March 2024

RTL Quarterly Meeting – Jan
Method Development Validation Training – March 26-28, 2024
SOFT TRC Meeting
NSC-ADID Half Day Meeting
Method Development Meetings with Presenters
Meetings with AZ Labs regarding Testimony Training
NASID Member Meeting
NHTSA R 10 Oral Fluid Presentation

April 2024

2nd – NASID Planning Meeting
3rd - Laboratory Meetings: SDME, Hawaii,
4th – Laboratory Meetings: Phoenix PD
5th – 9th – Lifesavers Meeting
10th-11th – NHTSA R9 Partners Meeting
18th – ADID – ADID Resource Advocacy meeting
19th - Laboratory Meetings:LAPD
Calls/emails with Mesa PD on testimony training planning
19th – Meeting with George Chwe – AZ LE/Prosecutors Summit

May 2024

2nd – OSP Testimony Prep Meeting
16th- CA OTS IDTF Meeting
22nd – 26th – All-Rise Conference
24th - Focus Group-Cannabis Rescheduling-PIRE/AAAFST
29th – NASID Planning Meeting

June 2024

4th – Meeting with Sara OSP – Testimony Training Planning

6th – AAFS-SOFT Meeting
10th-12th – CA OTS LE Summit
12th – MN Testimony Training online
18th – Meeting with Raymond – Mesa PD – Testimony Training Planning
19th – Phone meeting with George Chwe – AZ Testimony training and LE Summit
20th – Meeting with Alaska – speaker for Alaska State Traffic Safety Summit
24th- 26th – All-Rise – Train the Trainer

July 2024

3rd –a) Meeting with Sara Short – for OSP Testimony Training
b) Meeting with Gary and George – DRE presentations for testimony trainings
11th-12th – OSP Testimony Training
15th – Standard 7 Advisory Committee – AllRise
18th – Meeting with Beth Barnes, Stacy Good, Raymond re AZ Testimony Training
19th – Meeting with Chris Re CA DOJ Testimony Training
19th – Finish Standard 7 draft assignment
29th – TRC meeting
29th – Meeting with Justin from Alliance regarding Alaska Traffic Safety meeting presentation

August 2024

5th – 7th – AZ LE and Prosecutors Summit
15th – TRC Meeting
20th – 22nd – CA DOJ Testimony Training and drinking study
23rd – AllRise Std 7 Meeting
26th-28th – AZ Testimony Training

September 2024

11th – Meeting about discussion board platform with Beth and Haley and RTLs
11th – AZ vs Smith Meeting
15-17 – Alaska Traffic Safety Summit
20th – ADID Subcommittee– Chuck, Darrin and RTLs meeting
26th – Cannabis Cues Meeting