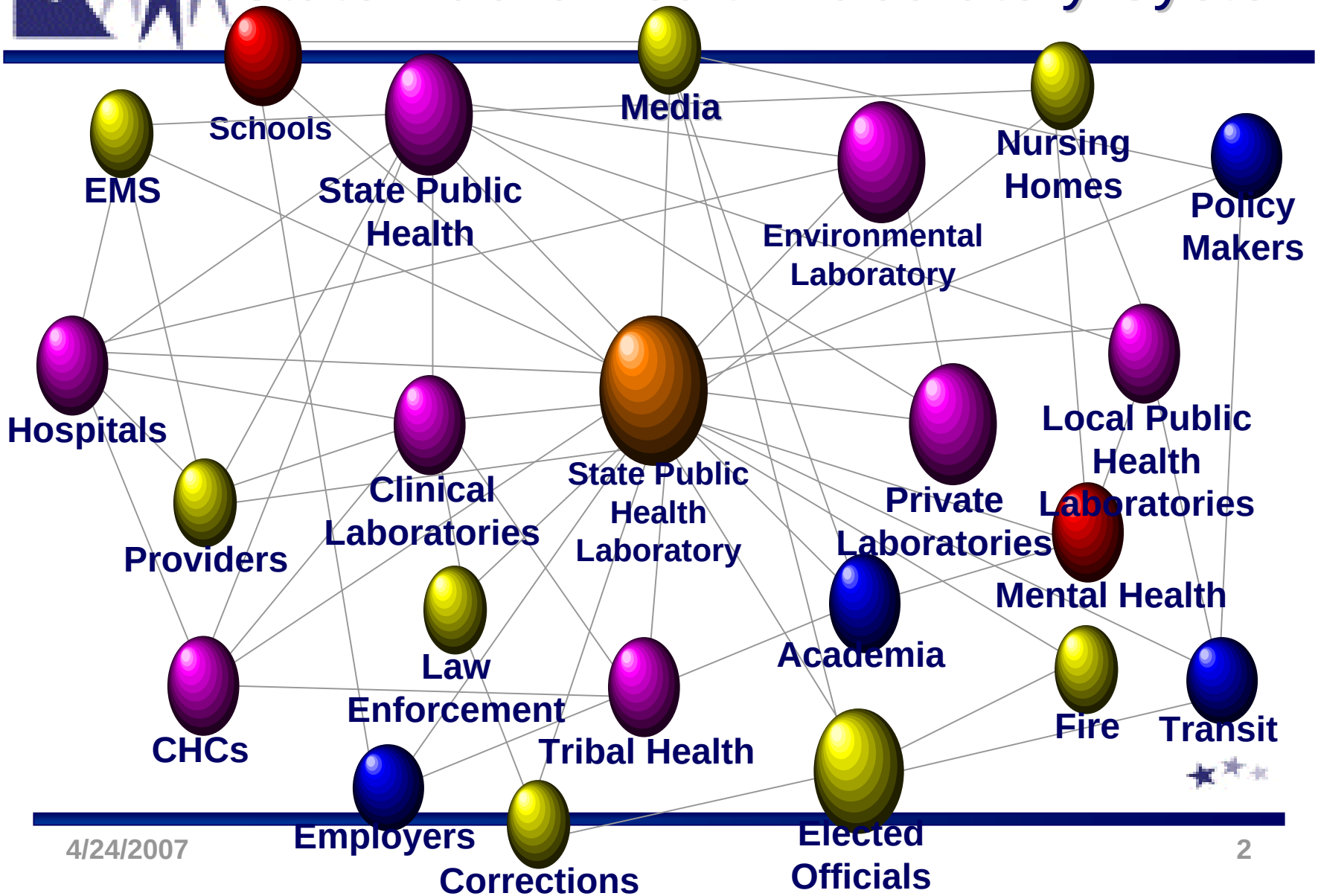
Texas Public Health Laboratory System Assessment
February 26-27, 2007

Summary of Results

State Public Health Laboratory System



Participants

- Core governmental organizations
  - DSHS
  - Local Public Health Depts and Labs
- Other governmental organizations
  - TCEQ
  - EPA
  - FDA
- Non-governmental organizations
  - Private laboratories
  - Private industry

Essential Service #1: Monitor Health Status

	0	1	2	3	4	9
	No Activity	No	No Partially	Yes Partially	Yes	Does not Apply
1.1.1: The SPH Laboratory System identifies sentinel health events and trends through interoperable laboratory information systems				X		
1.1.2: The SPH Laboratory System participates in national surveillance systems for state and national linkage				X		
1.1.3: SPH Laboratory System partners collaborate to strengthen surveillance systems		X				
1.2.1: The SPH Laboratory System has a comprehensive system to gather data, organisms and samples to support evaluating community and environmental health				X		
1.2.2: The SPH Laboratory System identifies and detects infectious diseases and contributes to a statewide surveillance system				X		
1.2.3: The SPH Laboratory System provides information to support monitoring of congenital, inherited, and metabolic diseases of public health significance					X	
1.2.4: The SPH Laboratory System generates reliable information about chronic diseases of public health significance		X				
1.2.5: SPH Laboratory System has a secure, accountable and integrated information management system for data storage, analysis, retrieval, reporting and exchange	X					

Essential Service #2: Diagnose and investigate health problems

	0	1	2	3	4	9
	No Act.	No	No Partially	Yes Partially	Yes	Does not Apply
2.1.1: The SPH Laboratory System assures provision of services at the highest level of quality to assist in the diagnosis and investigation of all health problems and hazards				X		
2.2.1: SPH Laboratory System members are actively involved in networks that collaborate in the epidemiological investigation of and response to natural and man-made disasters			X			
2.3.1: The SPH Laboratory System has the ability to respond rapidly to medical and public health emergencies				X		

Overall Score for Each Essential Function (ES)

	Yes	**Yes Partially**	**No Partially**	**No**	**No Activity**
ES #1: Monitor health status to identify community health problems			**X**		
ES #2: Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community		**X**			
ES #3: Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues		**X**			
ES #4: Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems			**X**		
ES #5: Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts			**X**		
ES #6: Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety		**X**			
#7: Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of healthcare when otherwise unavailable			**X**		
#8: Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce		**X**			
#9: Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based services				**X**	
#10: Research for insights and innovative solutions to health problems					**X**
	Yes	**Yes Partially**	**No Partially**	**No**	**No Activity**

Overall Assessment

- Collectively, the essential functions of the TPHLSA were assessed as :
  - “Yes Partially” for four of the 10 essential functions;
  - “No Partially” for four of the 10 essential functions;
  - “No” for one of the 10 essential functions;
  - “No Activity” for one of the 10 essential functions

Key Indicators

- Collectively, the key indicators of the TPHLSA were assessed as:
  - "Yes" for six of the 48 key indicators;
  - "Yes Partially" for 12 of the 48 key indicators;
  - "No Partially" for 10 of the 48 key indicators;
  - "No" for nine of the 48 key indicators;
  - "No Activity" for six of the 48 key indicators; and
  - "Does Not Apply" for five of the 48 key indicators.

Strongest Ratings

- The SPH Laboratory System provides information to support monitoring of congenital, inherited, and metabolic diseases of public health significance (ES # 1.2.3);
- The SPH Laboratory complies with and exceeds all applicable regulations (ES # 6.2.2);
- The SPH Laboratory and other appropriate government agencies collaborate to fulfill their enforcement function (ES # 6.3.2);
- Position requirements for all laboratory position categories within state and local public health laboratories are identified (ES # 8.1.1);
- The SPH Laboratory System has tools to assess competencies of the workforce (ES # 8.1.2); and
- The SPH Laboratory System identifies staff development needs (ES # 8.2.1).

Weakest Ratings

- The SPH Laboratory System partners collaborate to strengthen surveillance systems (ES # 1.1.3);
- The SPH Laboratory System generates reliable information about chronic diseases of public health significance (ES # 1.2.4);
- The SPH Laboratory System maintains an environment that attracts and retains exceptional staff (ES # 8.3.1);
- The SPH Laboratory System addresses workforce shortage issues (ES # 8.3.2);
- The SPH Laboratory System mission, purpose, and range of services are evaluated on a regular basis (ES # 9.1.1);

Weakest Ratings

- The range of technologies in use by the SPH Laboratory System is periodically surveyed and evaluated, with objective reports shared across the SPH Laboratory System (ES # 9.1.2);
- The effectiveness of personal and population-based laboratory services provided throughout the state is regularly determined (ES # 9.2.1);
- The quality of personal and population-based laboratory services provided throughout the state is regularly determined (ES # 9.2.2); and
- The level and utility of collaboration among members of the SPH Laboratory System is measured and shared (ES # 9.3.1).

Comments

- This issue isn't labs alone. It's labs, Public Health nurses, and epidemiologists.
- Because of litigations issues, private labs CAN'T discuss issues. They are precluded from revealing potential public health risks.
- Local physicians and hospitals don't always communicate issues as needed.
- It doesn't seem that the system partners understand what would happen in an emergency
- General public doesn't "see" lab work until it's negative
- Free testing

Comments

- System not defined – how to identify constituents to maintain relationships?
- We do a lot of these activities, but not sure how well
- Local politics affects reporting from local areas, therefore it isn't getting to the state to get to CDC
- We promote compliance within, but not necessarily throughout the system
- Dedicated staff stay for personal satisfaction, not money
- While individual labs may evaluate themselves, the system as a whole does not coordinate their evaluation activities or share their results
- Communication is not happening on a system-wide basis

Next Steps

- Participants identified the following steps to be taken to improve the laboratory system.
  - The system must be defined.
  - Comprehending the public health laboratory system proved to be the most difficult aspect for participants.
  - It was generally agreed that defining the system would be an on going task for all involved.
- Additional meetings of system partners should be held beginning with a strategic planning forum for the public health laboratory system.
  - The focus of this forum should be to establish a system improvement plan.

Next Steps

- The plan should consist of the following components.
  - Establish a vision and mission for the SPH Laboratory System.
  - Identify and prioritize goals for improvement of the SPH Laboratory System by:
    - Developing system plans and policies;
    - Establishing collaborative networks;
    - Creating a secure, accountable and compatible information network;
    - Conducting on going evaluation and analysis of the system to allow opportunities for improvement and to identify gaps;
    - Improving the quality and education of the workforce; and
    - Building an infrastructure for research and development of new and better systems.
  - Develop implementation strategies.