



THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FACT SHEET

DIVISION OF OPERATIONS LABORATORY PROGRAM

Mission:

The mission of the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), Division of Operations, Laboratory Program is to improve the health status of Georgians by providing accurate, timely and confidential clinical and non-clinical laboratory testing in support of DPH programs, activities and initiatives as well as performing tests for Emergency Preparedness.

Background:

The Georgia Public Health Laboratory was established in 1905 by an act of the State Legislature. At that time the Department of Health was comprised of the Laboratory and Administration. The first Health Laboratory was located in the basement of the Capitol Building in space formerly used as a stable. The Laboratory moved into the Health building on Trinity Avenue (Atlanta) in the mid-1950s and the Regional Laboratories were added to improve service delivery throughout the State. In the mid-1990s, due to expansion of the type of testing being performed and the need for more safe and secure laboratory facilities, funding was received to design and build a new Central Facility. A new Waycross Laboratory was funded and built in 2006. Upon the transition of the Division of Public Health, Georgia Department of Community Health to full agency status as the Georgia Department of Public Health on July 1, 2011, the Laboratory program was placed under the Division of Operations.

Overview:

The Laboratory has come a long way since 1905, consisting of laboratory facilities in three locations, including:

- Central Laboratory Facility in Decatur, Georgia (opened in December 1997)
- Albany Regional Laboratory
- Waycross Public Health Laboratory (opened in August 2007)

There are five broad areas of testing and support, including:

- Chemistry (Newborn Screening Unit, Lead Screening and Fluoride Testing)
- Emergency Preparedness (Biological/Chemical Terrorism and Molecular Biology Units)
- Facilities Support
- Microbiology (Bacteriology, Microbial Immunology, Mycology/ Mycobacteriology, Parasitology and Virology Units)
- Operations (Accessioning, Data Entry, Reports & Records, Billing, Budget, Personnel and Purchasing)

There are 150 positions in areas of Administrative, Technical, Clerical and Support responsibility. All three facilities comply with both State and Federal (CLIA'88) Clinical Laboratory Licensure requirements.

Accomplishments:

In FY2011 (July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011) the Laboratory received 585,220 specimens for testing. A total of 7,652,865 tests/examinations/determinations were performed on the specimens that were received. Additionally, 289,923 tests were performed for Quality Control (QC).

The Laboratory Program works closely with other DPH programs such as Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases to help identify, respond to and investigate disease outbreaks. Interaction with Public Health Laboratory partners include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), clinical laboratories throughout the State, County Health Departments, hospitals/health care providers, professional organizations and with Emergency Preparedness Laboratories to assure that our mission is met.