



News Release

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DCLS once again named CDC's Mid-Atlantic PulseNet Area Laboratory

~ State Laboratory to provide training, support to regional labs to detect foodborne illness ~

Richmond, VA – The Department of General Services (DGS) announced today that its Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) was selected to serve as the PulseNet Area Laboratory for the Mid-Atlantic region for another five years.

DCLS was one of seven labs nationwide chosen by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through a competitive renewal process to receive the regional designation, which requires it to provide training and support to PulseNet laboratories in the Mid-Atlantic region that includes West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and Washington, D.C.

The CDC's PulseNet program is a national network that serves to identify clusters of foodborne illnesses throughout the United States. Each state has at least one laboratory that participates in the network by populating the PulseNet database with "DNA fingerprints" of foodborne bacteria, such as *E. coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Salmonella*, isolated from ill patients. The "fingerprint" is identified using a molecular test called Pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE). Those "fingerprints" are compared at the state level to identify indistinguishable matches, which can suggest a cluster of illness or the beginning of an outbreak. Once uploaded into the national database, scientists can identify potential multistate or national outbreaks.

Each year, PulseNet identifies approximately 1,500 clusters of foodborne disease at the local and state level, about 250 that span multiple states and 10-15 national outbreaks, according to the CDC.

DCLS has served as a PulseNet Area Laboratory since 2000.

“PulseNet allows scientists across the country to quickly connect the dots so that contaminated food can be identified and removed from the marketplace,” said Richard F. Sliwoski, P.E., Director of the Department of General Services. “We are honored that Virginia’s State Laboratory was once again singled out for the role it plays in keeping our food supply safe.”

DCLS, Virginia’s public health and environmental laboratory, performs more than 7 million tests annually to identify genetic and metabolic disorders in newborn children and to detect infectious agents and toxic chemicals in humans, animals, the environment, the food we eat and the water we drink. Each year, DCLS trains more than 5,000 scientists, certifies nearly 100 laboratories, receives over 1 million samples, and prepares and distributes more than 300,000 test collection kits across the Commonwealth. More information is available at <http://www.dgs.virginia.gov>.

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