

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Departmental Correspondence

DATE: February 11, 2002

HEARING DATE: February 26, 2002

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: John Conley, Deputy Director of Public Health

SUBJECT: Agreement with the State of California for HIV-1 Viral Load Testing

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution authorizing the President of the Board to execute an agreement with the State of California to receive reimbursement for HIV-1 viral load tests performed in the Public Health Laboratory.

Background

For the past four years, San Mateo County has received viral load testing vouchers from the California State Office of AIDS (OA) for use in decreasing the county's cost for testing clients who are ineligible for Medi-Cal. However, the closest state-certified laboratory able to perform the viral load tests is in Contra Costa County. Transporting blood specimens to another county is inconvenient, expensive, and often results in a time delay for lab results.

It is more cost effective and efficient to perform the viral load tests locally. The Public Health Laboratory's infrastructure has been upgraded to be able to perform these HIV-1 viral load tests with no additional staff requirements.

Discussion

As one of 13 participating viral load test laboratories (VLT), the County will provide HIV-1 VLT services for AIDS Drug Assistance (ADAP)-eligible clients from Early Intervention Program (EIP) sites and Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ) sites. In order to qualify for reimbursement, the County must follow a detailed protocol outlined by the state OA. Designated EIP staff and individuals authorized by LHJ sites shall determine client eligibility and complete a VLT voucher for each sample submitted for analysis and subsequent reimbursement.

The client's medical provider will determine the number of tests per individual and the frequency of testing. The County projected it would perform up to 500 of these reimbursable tests during the term of July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. Based on this projection, the maximum number

of regional client viral load tests performed by the county is not to exceed 500 (500 tests x \$100 per test = \$50,000), the cost of which will be reimbursed under this agreement.

Outcome Measures

High plasma levels of HIV-1 RNA are predictive of disease progression; therefore, viral load monitoring of these levels in patients will guide therapeutic changes and improve patient clinical status. The Public Health Laboratory will perform the viral load test on all specimens submitted to the laboratory by the client's medical provider and have the result within 10 working days. The test results will be sent to the clinics submitting the specimens within 14 days of receipt of the specimens in the laboratory. The viral load testing vouchers for each sample will be submitted to the state OA for reimbursement at the end of each billing month. The HIV-1 viral load test results will help the physician in starting anti-retroviral therapy, monitor the amount of retrovirus in the patient's plasma and improve the patient's clinical status.

Vision Alignment

The contract with the State Office of AIDS keeps the commitment of ensuring basic health and safety for all and goal number 5: Residents have access to health care and preventive care. The contract contributes to this commitment and goal since local testing is less expensive and reduces the time to obtain test results, and supports patient care.

Term and Fiscal Impact

The term of this agreement is July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. This agreement was delayed because the contract was not received from the State until early December 2001. The \$50,000 of revenue has been included in the approved FY 2001-02 Public Health Division's budget. Administrative oversight, technical assistance, and contract monitoring will be provided by state OA staff. There is no net county cost.

RECOMMENDED

Charlene A. Silva

HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT