

**Westchester County Department of Laboratories and Research**  
**2017 Proposed Operating Budget**

**Mission**

This department's mission is two-fold:

1. Performance of all major laboratory testing for Westchester County including:
  - a. Microbiological testing of clinical specimens for TB, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, Swine Flu, and new emerging diseases. Major client: Westchester County Dept. of Health.  
  
Testing for biodefense – related incidents as a member of the nationwide CDC Laboratory Response Network. Clients: Emergency response and related agencies of the seven (7) counties in the lower Hudson Valley which includes Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster.
  - b. Environmental testing of air, water, food, soil, and waste to monitor the environment and control disease. Major clients: Westchester County Dept. of Health, Westchester County Dept. of Environmental Facilities, municipal water departments.
  - c. Forensic Science ("crime lab") evidence collection and analyses including DNA, illicit drugs, trace evidence, and photography to aid in crime prevention, crime solving and prosecution of criminals. Major clients: 43 Town and Village Police Departments, Westchester District Attorney, New York State Police, and Federal CODIS (DNA Identification Program).
  - d. Toxicological analyses of body fluids and tissues for Medical Examiner and DWI/DFSA cases. Major clients: 43 Town and Village Police Departments, Westchester District Attorney, Westchester Department of Public Safety, New York State Police.
2. Medical Examiner functions including investigation of all unexpected deaths occurring within Westchester County.

**Accomplishments**

During the past year this department achieved a number of accomplishments including the following:

The **Forensic** Division has completed the validation of a DNA profiling kit that will allow for faster identification of suspects through our participation with the FBI CODIS DNA database. The laboratory is also in the process of completing a validation of an instrument in the Controlled substances section that will speed up analysis of drug submissions. This instrument uses robotics to replace time consuming hand pipetting transfers of drug solutions. Improvements made to our computerized Laboratory Information Management System have allowed us to better communicate both within our Department and between the user agencies we serve.

**Toxicology** continues to add and detect new fentanyl analogues, illegal designer benzodiazepines and opiates and newer bath salts to screen and confirm in casework. There is an increase in opiate and fentanyl deaths and an increase in the use of these drugs in DWAI (Driving While Ability Impaired) casework. The lab is validating the new LC/MS instrument to move methods from the HPLC to increase sensitivity, decrease sample size, decrease solvent use and decrease turn-around-time. This is an ongoing process. We are preparing for the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) inspection. We continue to support all breath instruments used in Westchester County and testify for refusal cases in court.

The **Environmental** Section has implemented rapid bacteriological testing methods to reduce turn-around times to 24 hours from 3-5 days for both potable and non-potable water E. Coli detection and enumeration. The laboratory

performed lead testing for a large/growing number of Westchester County homeowners as a result of increased awareness to the wide spread presence, and to the adverse health effects caused by this heavy metal. Two Laboratory information collection and archival systems were upgraded. Two replacement instruments were purchased, one to expedite Biological Oxygen Demand analysis, and one to improve sensitivity of Volatile Organic Contaminants analysis. The results obtained from these instruments provide critical data to DEF and the Health Department to ensure the continued health and safety of the public.

**Microbiological** Services expanded the use of automated rapid molecular diagnostic testing methods to provide patients test results of critical importance to the County Health Department and local acute care hospitals within 24 hours. This included initial roll-out of norovirus assay in cases of gastrointestinal disease outbreaks and broadening the use of the rapid tuberculosis assay to assist clinicians with the decision of whether and when to discontinue respiratory isolation of patients. The diagnostic immunology method was updated for HIV testing. In July 2016, the bacteriology section received interim approval from the NYSDOH's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation program to perform *Legionella* cultures of samples of drinking water and water from cooling towers.

### **Tax Levy**

The 2017 Budget that is before the Board of Legislators at this time, proposes a tax levy of \$9,355,858.

### **Expenditures**

#### Annual Regular (1010)

- This account increases \$157,578 which includes the filling of 2 vacant Forensic positions and the upgrading of 5 Toxicologist positions (JG11) to Toxicologist Specialists (JG12) based on the findings of Human Resources.

#### Materials & Supplies (3000's)

- This account increases by \$4,531., due to the water rates at the Valhalla Campus.

#### Expenses (4000's)

- This account increases by 12,596. This includes the continued Advance to Grants line for operation of the Biodefense Laboratory based on reduction of grant funding by NYS and also the addition of funding for the NYS Dept. Criminal Justice Services Aid to Crime Lab grant due to its capping of fringe reimbursement at 55%.

#### Interdepartmental charges (5000's)

- These charges for county supplied support services show an overall decrease of \$22,649.

### **Revenue**

#### Departmental Income (9067)

- Revenue is increased by \$179,000., as a result additional testing including Legionella.

#### Lab State Aid (9708)

- State Aid has been decreased by \$215,411. , due to continued changes of eligible expenses by NYS.