



# Management Bulletin

North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health | Laboratory Improvement Unit

## Onslow County: A Successful Team

There are over 9 million people in North Carolina. We encounter many different individual personalities each day. Sometimes personalities and work ethics just click. At the Onslow County Health Department (OCHD), it is obvious that this patient care team “clicks”.

The core laboratory team at OCHD consists of only four employees, but they work together to accomplish great things. Richelle Harrell has been with OCHD since 2002 and currently serves as the Laboratory Supervisor. She is joined by Whitney Baker, Medical Laboratory Technologist/Laboratory Manager who began work at the facility in 2015, and by Jaclyn Spring, Medical Laboratory Technician, employed by OCHD since fall 2016. Maya Suzuki rounds out this great patient care team as a part-time LPN who began work with the lab and immunizations sections in 2016.

This team embodies some essential qualities that allow them to work together effectively, accomplishing tasks from registration and billing, to laboratory, immunizations and nursing services. As a strong, effective team, they must exhibit the following skills.

### Identifying as a Team Member

Definition: A team member is a person belonging to a specific group of people involved in attempting to achieve a common goal. To be a

part of a successful team, members must work together to accomplish common objectives. No one member has the solution to every issue. Team members rely on each other and understand the strengths and weaknesses of each person involved. As Richelle Harrell states, “We’re like a family. Either inside or outside of the lab, all areas come together to get things done for our clients.”

### Communication

Definition: the imparting or interchange of information or news. For a team to be successful, communication is essential. The OCHD is preparing to undergo a huge change when the health department consolidates with the Division of Social Services and moves together into a new location to become the Onslow County Consolidated Human Services. This consolidation will allow clients needing services from the health department, WIC and food stamp areas to be better served with all services being housed in one building.

Communication will be essential for this restructuring to be successful, and the laboratory team is ready to take on the challenge. They are excited about the move and understand the benefits to the patients. Instead of viewing how change may affect their area only, they are looking at the big picture. They understand the importance of the added family rooms for parents,

children and social workers. They see how extra clinic space and exam rooms can increase efficiency with patient flow. Most importantly, they recognize how good communication can have a positive effect on a group that currently is housed in a building of 100 employees and will be moving to an environment where approximately 300 employees are housed!

## Leadership

Definition: an act or instance of leading; guidance; direction. Effective teams need a leader. The leader may not always be the same person. It may depend on the activity of the group at the time. The leader not only sets an example for the others, but also keeps the group on task and provides feedback when needed.

At OCHD, managers and directors from various departments work together to provide strong leadership for the entire organization. Employees know and understand expectations and goals, and departments work together to meet patient needs. Ms. Harrell states, "Our laboratory is very fortunate to have the full support of our Nursing Director, Elizabeth Junak, our Health Director, Angela Lee, and our assistant County Manager for Consolidated Human Services, Sherri Slater. Without their continued support, we would not be able to do the great job we do each and every day for our clients."

## Collaboration

Definition: a joint effort of multiple individuals or work groups to accomplish a

common goal. Not only do departments within OCHD work together with the lab, but collaboration also occurs with external partners. For several years, Coastal Carolina Community College has had a goal of partnering with the health department to train students in their phlebotomy program. In March of 2017, a pilot project will begin to allow one student to assist lab personnel during a clinical rotation in phlebotomy. The student will be onsite for six weeks. After OCHD moves to their new building in August, clinical rotations will commence allowing each student to conduct a six-week rotation. This type of collaboration provides valuable hands-on learning experience for future healthcare workers and an opportunity for OCHD to participate in outreach and workforce development.

## Summary

Effective teams don't just happen. It takes effort from each team member. When each member understands the goals and the importance of their role in accomplishing them, success will be the result. Kudos to the Onslow County Laboratory and their partners for exhibiting the qualities that make them an outstanding team that can accomplish great things in caring for their patients and each other!





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