



RHODE ISLAND STATE PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES

Public health laboratories are vital in our society and continue to protect our lives on a daily basis. In such an important environment, quality and accuracy are essential for success.

Nicole Duffy, Quality Assurance Officer for Rhode Island State Public Health Laboratories, maintains compliance and quality for approximately one dozen labs.

Rhode Island State Public Health Laboratories consist of 70 people working across 3 different sections - clinical, environmental and forensic. Before moving to Qualtrax, all 3 sections were handled differently. Clinical and environmental sections were exclusively paper-based with documents moving across many desks. The forensic section was electronic, but not ideal for their working environment.

CONSISTENCY AND ACCESS

Nicole has taken advantage of revision tracking using Qualtrax. Previously, it was difficult to keep documents consistent because different versions of a document could be found in various places across the lab. Some kept printed versions on their desks, while others kept an electronic versions on their computers.

“Keeping up with the revisions was pretty much a nightmare, and it was very inconsistent,” Nicole said.

Now users can simply go to Qualtrax to access the most up-to-date document and view Document Properties for the revision history.

One of Nicole’s favorite features is the Header Footer Updater to automatically update macro information in her headers and footers including revision numbers, publish dates, page numbers, document types and any pre-Qualtrax identification numbers.

Their Qualtrax system also provides access to all laboratory documentation. Rhode Island’s Lab Director oversees all 3 sections and is able to easily access documentation without having to contact various individuals that have copies of the documents.

EDITING AND ASSESSING

Documentation updates are also more thorough under their Qualtrax system. People are willing to spend more time reviewing a document and making notations of their changes with greater detail.

"Supervisors spend more time looking at their documents and are willing to make more changes now that everything is digital," Nicole said.

This level of detail and transparency makes revisions more traceable and helpful during the auditing process.

TESTING AND TRAINING

Nicole makes use of the Testing and Training Modules in a unique way. She creates tests to act as read receipts or attestations to prove that everyone reads certain documents. She is then able to run reports on those tests.

"These reports are very customizable so you can pretty much set the filters for what you feel like querying," Nicole said.

Nicole also sets up trainings for MDLs when they are near expiration. Personnel then completes the MDL, attaches the summary and it is sent automatically to that person's direct supervisor and to Nicole. This data then becomes searchable and reportable.

BUSINESS PROCESSES

Workflows allow employees to share their concerns and create a better business process. One of the workflows created is for safety concerns. All submissions are sent to the safety committee members where they can make comments about how to move forward and hold discussions without having to meet in person or manage an email chain.

"The other thing for auditing and compliance which I absolutely love is the tracking of corrective actions," Nicole said.

Corrective action workflows allow quality officers to run reports and view logs in full detail including those who touched the workflow, responsible parties, root causes, corrective actions taken, comments and more.

START SMALL

Nicole spent about one month of implementation on each laboratory that she manages - adding documents and training individuals within one lab before moving on to the next. She also added all of her smaller documentation first so she could then hyperlink to those documents in her larger quality manuals.

Qualtrax, Inc. is based in Christiansburg, VA. Our purpose is to help businesses and people making critical contributions to society who, as a result, face heavy compliance burdens. We help make these organizations successful by doing what we love: building great software and services to take them beyond compliance.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the presenter and not necessarily those of the Rhode Island Department of Health.