

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Contractual Agreements between Eastern Health and External Specimen Collection Agencies



### What is an External Specimen Collection Agency?

An external specimen collection agency includes individuals or businesses, or the employer of an individual, who engages in phlebotomy or obtains any laboratory specimens from individuals for the purpose of laboratory testing.

This includes employees of the regional health authority who collect blood specimens as a business, or as a convenience for co-workers, friends, or family. Services provided by external collectors are not within the scope of employment with any regional health authority in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### What is required of external specimen collection agencies?

To ensure the integrity of specimens submitted for laboratory testing and that appropriate standards for collection and delivery are met, external collectors must establish a legal agreement for specimen acceptance with the health authority prior to collection. The *Agreement for Acceptance of Specimens Collected by External Agencies for Laboratory Testing at Eastern Health* is commonly known as the *Agreement for External Specimen Collectors*. There is an application process to enter into the Agreement. Successful applicants are permitted to submit specimens for testing.

### Why does Eastern Health require external specimen collectors to enter into contractual agreements?

Eastern Health must ensure appropriate standards for collection and delivery are met to protect integrity of specimens submitted for laboratory testing. Protecting specimen integrity is important to reduce risks for testing and diagnostic errors due to poor specimen quality. By signing an Agreement, external specimen collectors are committing to consistently meet these quality standards.

### Must all external specimen collectors enter into a contractual agreement with Eastern Health?

Yes. All external collector agencies must apply for, and if approved, enter into a legal Agreement.

### Where can I find a copy of the Agreement, so I know what is required?

The *Agreement for External Specimen Collectors* and related information can be found on the laboratory website external collectors tab [For external collectors – Laboratory Medicine \(easternhealth.ca\)](https://www.easternhealth.ca/external-collectors-laboratory-medicine).

### When must Agreements be in place?

As of March 31, 2023, a signed Agreement must be in place prior to submission of specimens for testing. Specimens submitted by specimen collectors without a signed Agreement and permit will be rejected.

### How do I apply for an Agreement?

Application instructions, guidelines, and forms for the application can be found on the laboratory website external collectors tab [For external collectors – Laboratory Medicine \(easternhealth.ca\)](https://www.easternhealth.ca/external-collectors-laboratory-medicine).

**What tests is an external collector permitted to collect?**

There is a comprehensive test menu defined for external collectors. This test menu excludes specimens and tests that have special collection requirements making it necessary to collect directly at an Eastern Health facility. The test menu is available on the laboratory website for external collectors and includes timeframes by which different specimen types must be delivered to the testing laboratory.

**What are the requirements for delivery of laboratory specimens?**

Working as an external specimen collector under the Agreement, specimens must be packaged in containers that meet specimen temperature requirements as well as Transportation of Dangerous Goods regulations. <https://tc.canada.ca/en/dangerous-goods/transportation-dangerous-goods-canada>

Specimens must be delivered to the testing laboratory within timeframes that ensure the integrity of the specimen and within specific hours/days to ensure specimens can be processed and tested within the required timeframe. Blood and urine specimens must be packaged appropriately following the requirements of the Agreement, the External Collectors Test Menu, and accompanied by the Specimen Tracking form. All these documents are available on the laboratory website for external collectors

**What is the responsibility of external collectors for equipment and supplies?**

External collection agencies must purchase their own equipment and supplies required for collection, handling, and transportation of blood and urine specimens. The equipment and supplies used must meet the requirements of the specimen, test request, and the laboratory performing the tests.

The equipment and supplies required include, but are not limited to, collection tubes, urine collection and preservation containers, needles, sharps containers, specimen labels, specimen racks, and transport containers.

**Can unregulated healthcare professionals perform independent phlebotomy?**

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are no current regulations stating that only regulated professionals are permitted to perform phlebotomy. To be permitted to collect and submit specimens to a laboratory under the Agreement, the specimen collector must have documented evidence of formal qualification in performing phlebotomy; and, demonstrate competency recognized as equivalent to phlebotomists employed at Eastern Health.

Evidence of formal qualifications may include a degree, diploma, or certificate issued by a qualified educational institute for regulated professions such as nursing, medical laboratory technologist, medical laboratory assistant, phlebotomist, physician, or other similarly trained health care professional.

**How can I find out more?**

For further information, refer to the Eastern Health Laboratory website <https://lab.easternhealth.ca/>

External Collectors tab <https://lab.easternhealth.ca/for-external-collectors/>