

# MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNICIANS IN CALIFORNIA

---

## Lessons from the Field

January 15, 2013

California Workforce Investment Board  
Health Workforce Development Council

Center for the Health Professions, UCSF  
Health Workforce Initiative, California  
Community College Chancellor's Office



# MLTs in California

- 414 licenses issued since 2007
  - 60 units of clinical courses
  - 6-months of clinical placement experience
  - Pass licensing exam
- CAN
  - Perform waived tests;
  - Perform moderately complex tests w/appropriate supervision\*
  - Phlebotomy—but not skin tests
  - Supervise LPTs and CPT1s
  - Report tests after competency is documented
- NO
  - No microscopy or immunohematology (blood banking)



Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center

# Our Study--

## Purpose

- Identify California hospitals that have successfully incorporated MLTs into their laboratory workforce
- Visit and profile these sites
- Disseminate findings so that others can learn about strategies/promising practices

## Methods

- Snowball sample
- 5 sites visited for case studies
- Interviewed directors, CLS, MLTs and educators



# Case Study Sites and Training Programs

- Sutter Health  
Sacramento Sierra  
Region

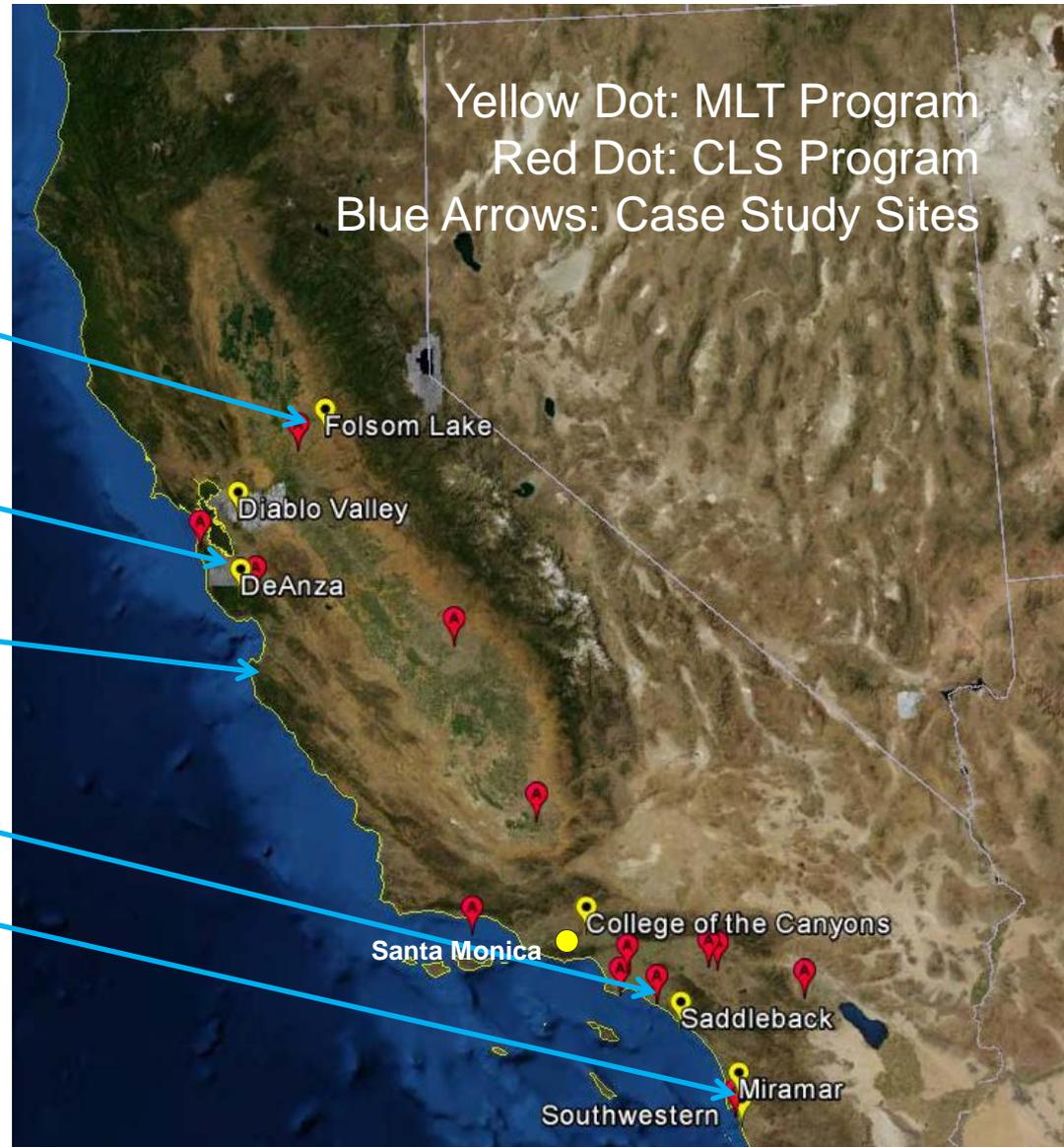
- Kaiser Santa Clara

- Community Hospital of  
the Monterey  
Peninsula (CHOMP)

- Hoag Hospital

- Kaiser San Diego

Yellow Dot: MLT Program  
Red Dot: CLS Program  
Blue Arrows: Case Study Sites



# Findings

- MLTs are working in labs across California
- Relative to CLSs, MLTs are still a small profession
- Most hospital labs that are using MLTs employ small numbers; few are close to meeting CLS:MLT staff ratios
- Availability of training programs increasingly problematic
- Opposition by incumbent workers and administration prevalent



# CHALLENGES

---



# Challenges

1. CLS resistance / concern about replacement
2. CLS resistance / concern about quality
3. MLT scope limitations
4. Lack of time and resources to train students
5. Concern about viability of training programs
6. (General lack of awareness about the MLT occupation)

# STRATEGIES & SUCCESS FACTORS

---



Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula

# Strategies & Success Factors

- Obtain support from top management
- Address union issues
- Examine workflow and utilize automation
- Clarify MLT scope and roles
- Serve as a clinical placement site
- Encourage incumbent lab assistants to become MLTs
- Introduce MLT positions via add-on or attrition only
- Build relationship with community college program
- Large volume of moderate-complexity testing
- Standardization across sites within a system
- Experienced education coordinator

# BENEFITS

---



# Benefits

- MLT wage = 70 - 80% that of CLS
- Internship time for MLT is 1/2 that of CLS
- No requirement to pay MLT interns stipends
- MLTs can provide support that allows CLSs to focus on more complex testing
- MLTs can help fill vacancies left by retiring CLSs
- MLT provides career step between lab assistant and CLS
- Mentoring students keeps CLSs' skills fresh
- ROI from MLTs as part of practice redesign\*



## Health Workforce Initiative

---

Catherine Dower, JD  
Health Policy and Law Director  
[Catherine.Dower@ucsf.edu](mailto:Catherine.Dower@ucsf.edu)

Susan Chapman, BSN, MSN, PhD  
Faculty Researcher  
[Susan.Chapman@ucsf.edu](mailto:Susan.Chapman@ucsf.edu)

Lisel Blash, MPA  
Senior Research Analyst  
[Lisel.Blash@ucsf.edu](mailto:Lisel.Blash@ucsf.edu)

This project was produced pursuant to grant agreement number 12-161-001. This project was supported by Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, Title 1, Part B. Funds awarded to the Health Workforce Initiative, Butte Community College by the Chancellor's Office, California Community College.

<http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/>