

Survey to Chief APOs

Issue: Drug Testing and Lab Services

Question (from Adams County)

Adams County is currently using Intrinsic Interventions to purchase drug testing supplies and we use Cordant Health Solutions for lab services. We are having issues with many drug screens initially testing positive (on the Intrinsic Interventions test strips), but then coming back from the lab showing no substance present.

This is most often happening with fentanyl testing, however, it has happened less frequently with a few other substances.

We would like to do a survey to see if other departments are having similar issues with current vendors, to rule out a vendor/test supply issue.

If other departments are also struggling with false positive issues, we would also like to learn how your department is handling these situations.

Questions:

- 1) If your department still performs urinalysis tests in house, which company do you purchase your drug testing supplies from?
- 2) What lab do you use for confirmation?
- 3) Are you having any issues with initial false positives using in house tests (with lab test then coming back showing negative for the substance)? If so, how is your department handling those situations?

Allegheny County

- 1) Our instant tests are from Redwood but only used for court drug testing. In house, we use Averhealth Labs for which there is no instant option so they are all sent for an initial presumptive result. Upon positive result, we can then ask for a formal confirmation depending if the individual tested confirms or denies use.
- 2) Averhealth
- 3) Speaking for the instant Redwood cups used at court: not recently. Since instant tests are really only used for courthouse drug testing, we do not deal with instant false positives in the probation offices.

Blair County

Same as Somerset

Chester County

Chester County is the exact same as Allegheny Co.

Clearfield County

Clearfield also purchases the in-house devices from Intrinsic Interventions and our lab is Atlantic Diagnostic Laboratories (ADL). We have had situations where the test was positive on the device, but results were negative from the lab. When this happens, if we then have the lab run a confirmation (GC- MS) for the drug, it usually comes back positive but at a lower level than the cut-off for the labs screening test.

It is my understanding that when the lab receives a sample, they run a screening test, very much like the in-house tests we use but the labs testing devices may have a higher cut-off level than our in-house tests. If the sample doesn't show positive on their screening test, they will not run the more specific (GC-MS) confirmation test and will just report the negative result. I don't know if that's what is happening in your (false positive) cases, but it may deserve some looking into

Delaware County

We are the same as Lehigh (also utilize Redwood). We do not have too many problems with false positives. If we have a few in a row, we contact Redwood to address the concern with the cups being used. We will never incarcerate on a potential false positive. We always make sure we have lab confirmation and typically multiple positives and/or admissions.

Erie County

In Erie County, we use Redwood for testing supplies as well lab confirmations. As far as false positives, mostly for fentanyl and only occasionally. We also do not incarcerate on a denial until we have lab confirmation.

Lehigh County

- 1) Yes - Redwood
- 2) Redwood
- 3) no

Somerset County

We utilize Redwood for testing supplies as well lab confirmations. I suspect, as with most counties, false positives, are most often with fentanyl. We do not move forward until we have a lab confirmation.

Wayne County

Wayne uses Premier Biotech drug screens and we use their lab for confirmations.

Their screen tests have been rather accurate, but there are those out-liars that can and usually do occur with fentanyl. We've noticed that certain prescriptions/medications an offender is

prescribed can trigger a test screen strip to read a false positive, just about always for fentanyl. Once confirmed thru lab, the contradiction usually involves prescribed meds. When that occurs, we will discuss this with the lab technician or other expert, to assure us of that those prescribed medication(s) have the ability to interfere with the screen results.

Also, we recently had an offender that tested positive for fentanyl all the time due prescription meds on his screen test. So it is important to realize, some meds do mess up our screen tests. Since the offender knew this to be a real occurrence, we would every so often send the sample to the lab for confirmation anyway to assure us that no fentanyl was being used. Otherwise, we had no other way of knowing by basic screen testing.

My two cents, seldom is there ever not a reason for why a screen test reads the way it does; I believe the screen reads exactly what it should. Knowing why it reads negative or positive requires expert analysis sometimes—excluding a bad batch of drug test screens (faulty manufacturing) of course.

Westmoreland County

- 1) In house - Phamatech
- 2) Phamatech
- 3) Yes. It is our understanding that false positives may occur on a screen due to the presence of a substance, such as a medication, and that would trip the screen. We do not have many of those instances though.