



Laboratory Quality Assurance
1610 NE 150th Street
Shoreline, WA 98155-9701
(206) 418-5600

Who Can Order and Interpret Laboratory Tests?

by Gail Neuenschwander

A common question that is received by the Office of Laboratory Quality Assurance is “Who can order a laboratory test in Washington State?” Laboratories get requests for testing from a wide range of provider types. In addition, more and more consumers are calling laboratories and requesting testing on themselves.

The federal Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA) state that laboratory tests can only be performed when there is a written request from an “authorized person”. The definition of “authorized person” is left up to the individual states. In Washington, the Medical Test Site Rule, WAC 246-338-010(2), defines “authorized person” as “any individual allowed by Washington State law or rule to order tests or receive test results”. No other state law or rule specifically elaborates on “authorized person” in regard to ordering of clinical laboratory tests. However, the scope of practice for licensed health professionals determines whether or not they can order and interpret laboratory tests.

Since there is no specific law prohibiting an individual from ordering a test on themselves or receiving the test results, a laboratory may set their own policies on whether or not they will accept test orders from individuals. In setting such policies, the laboratory needs to consider other state laws regarding confidentiality issues and requirements for counseling patients (*e.g.*, HIV testing). In addition, other regulations might apply for the facility, such as hospital rules that stipulate that patient services must be provided in accordance with a written order or protocol by an authorized practitioner. If a laboratory prefers not to perform tests for, or provide results to a private individual, it should establish a written policy, in consultation with its legal counsel, on this issue.

Page 2 has a list of health professions regulated by the Department of Health. The list addresses whether they can order laboratory tests and receive and interpret results for purposes of diagnosis and treatment. Specific questions regarding this list can be addressed to Susan Walker, Department of Health, Laboratory Quality Assurance (phone: 206-418-5418; e-mail: susan.walker@doh.wa.gov).

DOH Health Professions Quality Assurance Regulated Health Professions

RCW	Profession	Who can order lab tests for purposes of diagnosis for decisions regarding treatment?	Who can receive and interpret results from lab tests for purposes of diagnosis for decisions regarding treatment?
18.06	Acupuncture	no	no
18.79	Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.35	Audiologist	no	no
18.205	Chemical Dependency Professionals	no	no
18.25	Chiropractor	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.25	Chiropractic X-Ray Technician	no	no
18.19	Counselor	no	no
18.29	Dental Hygienist	no	no
18.32	Dentist	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.30	Denturist	no	no
18.138	Dietitian	no	no
18.34	Dispensing Optician	no	no
18.135	Health Care Assistant	no	no
18.35	Hearing Instrument Fitter/Dispenser	no	no
18.19	Hypnotherapist	no	no
18.79	Licensed Practical Nurse	no**	no**
18.225	Marriage & Family Therapist	no	no
18.108	Massage	no	no
18.225	Mental Health Counselor	no	no
18.50	Midwife	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.36A	Naturopath	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.88A	Nursing Assistant	no	no
18.52	Nursing Home Administrator	no	no
18.52C	Nursing Pool Operator	no	no
18.79	Nursing Technician	no	no
18.138	Nutritionist	no	no
18.59	Occupational Therapist	no	no
18.59	Occupational Therapist Assistant	no	no
18.55	Ocularist	no	no
18.53, 18.54	Optometrist	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.200	Orthotics/Prosthetics	no	no
18.57	Osteopathic Physician & Surgeon	yes	yes
18.57A	Osteopathic Physician Assistant	yes****	yes****
18.64, 18.64A	Pharmacies & Other Pharmaceutical Firms	no	no
18.64	Pharmacist	yes***	yes***
18.64, 18.64A	Pharmacy Assistant	no	no
18.64	Pharmacy Interns	no	no
18.64, 18.64A	Pharmacy Technician	no	no
18.74	Physical Therapist	no	no
18.71	Physician	yes	yes
18.71A	Physician Assistant	yes****	yes****
18.22	Podiatrist	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.83	Psychologist	no	no
18.84	Radiological Technician	no	no
18.230	Recreational Therapy	no	no
18.79	Registered Nurse	no**	no**
18.89	Respiratory Care Practitioner	no	no
18.155	Sex Offender Treatment Provider		
	Affiliate/Fully Certified	no	no
18.225	Social Worker	no	no
	Advanced Clinical/Independent	no	no
18.35	Speech Language Pathologist	no	no
18.215	Surgical Technologist	no	no
18.92	Veterinarian	yes, limited*	yes, limited*
18.92	Veterinarian Medical Clerk	no	no
18.92	Veterinary Technician	no	no
18.84	X-Ray Technician	no	no

*May only order certain lab tests within their scope of practice. If questions arise, please contact Susan Walker at the Department of Health, Laboratory Quality Assurance (phone: 206-418-5418; e-mail: susan.walker@doh.wa.gov).

**RNs and LPNs may not independently order lab tests, however, they are expected to recognize abnormal values and to notify the physician who ordered the test. Some facilities have protocols or standing orders for selected groups of patients which include lab tests that should be automatically ordered upon admission. In those cases, RNs may implement the standard order for lab tests.

***Pharmacists may order tests to monitor and evaluate.

****Physician assistants may order lab tests allowed under their supervision agreement with their supervising physician