

THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAB CHRONICLES

RIVERSIDE COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH LAB

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

GREETINGS FROM OUR LABORATORY DIRECTOR, DR. SYREETA STEELE

Welcome to the first edition of The Public Health Lab Chronicles, the biannual newsletter from Riverside County Public Health Laboratory (RPHL). Our laboratory continues to grow and evolve to meet the changing needs of public health in Riverside County. From expanding testing capabilities and strengthening partnerships to supporting disease surveillance and environmental monitoring, our team remains committed to protecting community health.



Syreeta Steele

Through the Lab Chronicles, we look forward to sharing important updates, new initiatives, and a closer look at the work happening behind the scenes at your public health laboratory.

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust in our mission.

Dr. Syreeta Steele

DID YOU KNOW?

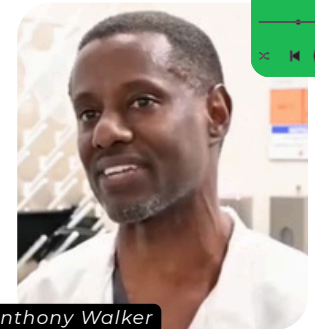
RPHL completed their first APHL L-SIP in January of 2024.



History & Purpose

Established in 1951, the Riverside County Public Health Laboratory supports disease surveillance and community health through infectious disease and environmental testing. The laboratory has been recently renovated and now includes BSL-3 space.

What is an L-SIP? The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) Laboratory System Improvement Program (L-SIP) provides a framework for public health laboratory systems to assess performance, improve collaboration, and advance system excellence.



Anthony Walker

A CENTURY OF SERVICE: PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY HIGHLIGHTS

As Riverside County Public Health celebrates 100 years of service, the Public Health Laboratory is proud to recognize its longstanding role in protecting the health of our communities. Throughout April 2026, visitors explored a Centennial mini museum display. To learn more about the history of the public health lab in Riverside County, follow RUHS Public Health on social media and watch the April Centennial Spotlight featuring Public Health Microbiologist III Anthony Walker available on Instagram and Facebook (@ruhspublichealth) and listen to the EquiTEA podcast feature, *More than Microscopes: Inside the Public Health Lab*, available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify (@RiversideCountyPublicHealth).

SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Public Health Laboratory is expanding the use of the Lab Web Portal (LWP) to create a more connected and efficient laboratory system across the county by reducing reliance on paper test request forms and streamlining communication, LWP helps improve the overall submission and reporting process for participating partners.

BENEFITS OF LWP

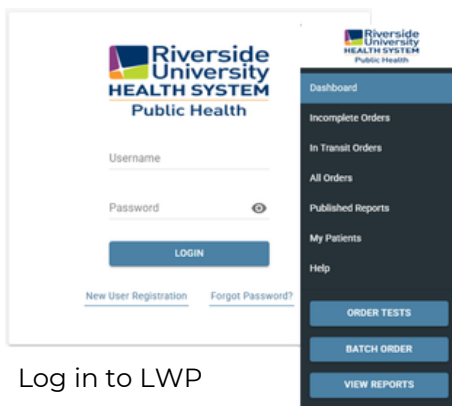
- Electronic specimen submission
- Faster access to results
- Reduced paperwork and submission errors

TRANSITION TO THE LAB WEB PORTAL (LWP)

All submitters will transition to LWP for electronic specimen submissions and to view results. Facilities will receive onboarding support, training, and guidance throughout the transition process to ensure a smooth implementation. To schedule onboarding to LWP, please contact PHLwebportal@ruhealth.org.

LWP SUBMISSION STEPS

STEP 1



Log in to LWP

Submit order

STEP 2



Request courier pick up (if applicable)

STEP 3



Lab receives sample & performs tests



Results in portal

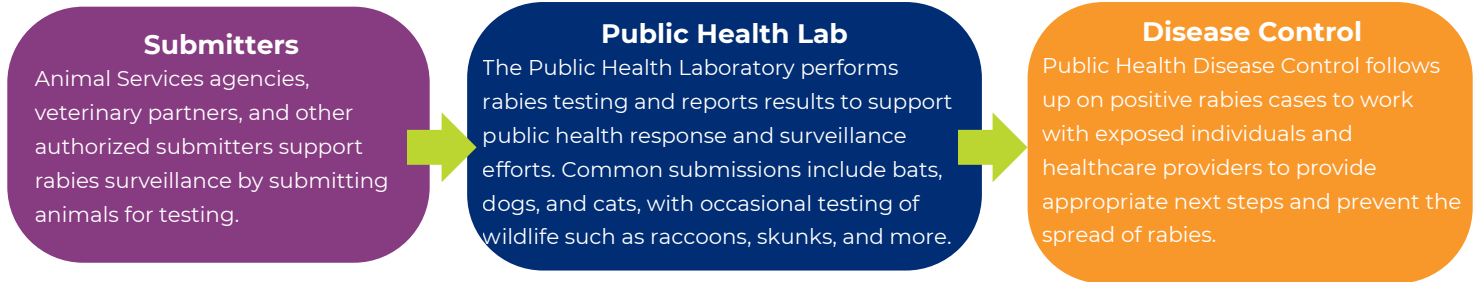
RABIES SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

The Rabies Surveillance Program helps identify and respond to potential rabies exposures in Riverside County through coordinated testing and public health response efforts. Working together with the submitters, the Public Health Laboratory, and Disease Control help protect both residents and animals from this life-threatening disease. Early detection and coordinated response efforts help reduce the risk of rabies exposure within the community.



Did you know?
World Rabies Day is September 28

COLLABORATIVE BREAKDOWN



WASTEWATER SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

The Public Health Laboratory launched the Wastewater Surveillance Program in 2025 to monitor infectious diseases in Riverside County. The program currently provides early detection of pathogens like SARS-CoV-2, Influenza A/B, and RSV. Data produced helps public health officials respond quickly to protect the community.



WHY WASTEWATER SURVEILLANCE MATTERS

Disease patterns change over time, making continuous monitoring an important part of protecting community health. The Riverside County Public Health Wastewater Surveillance Dashboard (Figure 1) illustrates these changes by displaying pathogen trends over the course of the surveillance season, helping public health officials and community partners better understand local disease activity. For more information about the Wastewater Surveillance Program, please contact us at rphlsurveillance@ruhealth.org or epe.eddi@ruhealth.org.

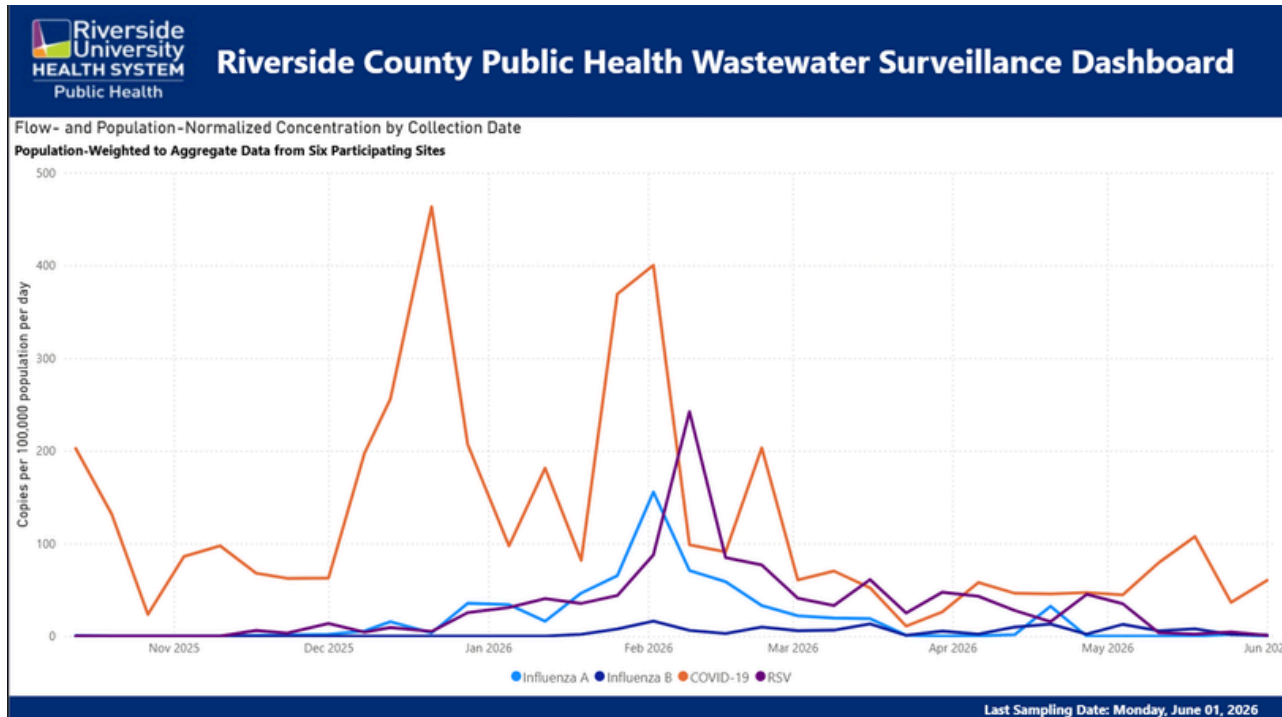


Figure 1 Riverside County Public Health wastewater surveillance dashboard shows pathogen trends from participating wastewater treatment facilities during the 2025–2026 surveillance season.

Did You Know?
Wastewater surveillance can detect changing infection trends of respiratory diseases 4-6 days earlier than clinical cases.

ABOUT THE EDDI PROGRAM
The Enhanced Disease Detection & Investigation (EDDI) Program partners with the Public Health Laboratory to strengthen wastewater surveillance and other surveillance initiatives. EDDI also publishes a monthly Data Digest highlighting disease trends across Riverside County.

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR) SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

The AMR Surveillance Program is a collaborative initiative launched in Fall of 2025 to support early detection of antimicrobial-resistant organisms, strengthening infection prevention efforts and providing critical data to guide public health efforts.

Program Goals:

- Detect and prevent outbreaks caused by antimicrobial-resistant (AMR) organisms.
- Support healthcare facilities through surveillance, screening, and testing activities.
- Improve patient care by monitoring *Candida auris* and carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPOs)

Partnerships

Collaboration between PHL, Disease Control, EPE, CDPH, and healthcare facilities in Riverside County.

Surveillance Support

Support for Point-Prevalence Surveys (PPS), ongoing screening, and AMR testing kits for participating facilities.

Future Focus

The program aims to expand participation, support evolving surveillance guidance, and monitor priority AMR organisms per state guidelines.

Costs Associated

At this time, this program is 100% free for participating healthcare facilities providing courier and testing services.

We invite healthcare facilities throughout Riverside County to participate in this vital program. For more information, or to join, please contact the AMR Surveillance Team at rphlsurveillance@ruhealth.org.



RESPIRATORY SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

Respiratory surveillance provides the foundation for understanding disease trends in clinical cases, identifying emerging threats before they escalate, and also help provide data for vaccine development. By monitoring pathogens such as SARS-CoV-2, Influenza, and RSV, public health agencies can support healthcare facilities (guide response efforts, and help protect vulnerable populations). These efforts strengthen data-driven decision-making to safeguard the health of Riverside County residents.

INCREASING THE RESPIRATORY SURVEILLANCE NETWORK

The Riverside County Respiratory Surveillance Network continues to expand, with surveillance activities conducted annually from October through May. Healthcare partners are encouraged to submit positive respiratory samples meeting surveillance criteria, which may include pediatric patients, pregnant patients, hospitalized or ICU patients, and fatalities. As shown in Figure 2, sequencing data from the 2025–2026 respiratory season demonstrated that JN.1 remained the predominant SARS-CoV-2 lineage among sequenced specimens. For more information about the facility submission criteria, please contact us at rphlsurveillance@ruhealth.org.

Variant Distribution Among Sequenced SARS-CoV-2 (Omicron) Specimens from

Respiratory Season 2025-2026

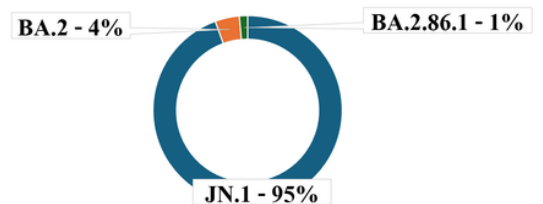


Figure 2 Variant distribution among sequenced SARS-CoV-2 specimens submitted through the Riverside County Respiratory Surveillance Program during the 2025–2026 season.

YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS!

Keep an eye out for our annual Customer Satisfaction Survey this September. Your feedback helps us improve services and better support our community partners. Not sure if you are on the subscription list? Send an email to phladmin@ruhealth.org.



Thank you for reading!

Proudly serving Riverside County since 1951.

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EMAIL CONTACTS

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| <p>SUBSCRIPTION LIST AND GENERAL SUPPORT: PHLADMIN@RUHEALTH.ORG</p> <p>LWP SUPPORT: PHLWEBPORTAL@RUHEALTH.ORG</p> | <p>SURVEILLANCE TEAM: RPHLSURVEILLANCE@RUHEALTH.ORG</p> <p>EDDI TEAM: EPE.EDDI@RUHEALTH.ORG</p> |
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