

## Specimen Collectors are the Gatekeepers

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In the drug testing process, the laboratory is looked at as the pinnacle of the program; however, the gatekeepers of a valid test are the collectors. The collection process is single-handedly the most important process of a drug test. In this issue, we would like to take the opportunity to point out and revisit some of the important protocols in the collections process to ensure a successful drug test.

The collection procedures can be the most vulnerable step in the entire drug testing process because of the human element. A certified laboratory is a controlled environment. The personnel work together on a daily basis. A collection can take place anywhere with a variety of different donors providing a sample, so it is important for the collector to be aware of the collection from beginning to end.

Having constant awareness of the donor providing the sample and the environment where he or she is providing the specimen can prevent adulteration and substitution to the specimen. Trained collectors should always have the necessary supplies ready prior to the donor's arrival.

First, know the specimen collection environment. A specimen collection could take place in a collection clinic, a public restroom with numerous stalls, a private restroom facility or in any other designated area that is private for a specimen collection. Once the collection location is determined, secure the collection site. Restrict unauthorized access to the site during the collection. It is recommended to post signs to the collection facility's entrances stating, "Drug Testing In Progress – Collectors and Donors Only."

After access to the collection site is restricted, inspect the area for foreign substances. Collectors must secure items such as ledges, trash receptacles, paper towel holders, and areas under the sinks. These areas can be havens for concealing contaminants in a collection area. Any materials in the collection area that can be used to contaminate a specimen, such as soap, disinfectants, cleaning products, personal hygiene products or beverages, must be removed from the collection site. Secure all water sources. Use breakaway security tape on the sinks and add bluing to the toilet before the donor provides a specimen.

Second, know the donor. Check the donor's valid identification and record the information on the custody and control form. The donor must remove all unnecessary outer clothing such as a coat, jacket or hat. These clothing items could be used to conceal items to adulterate the specimen. Next, have the donor empty the contents of his or her pockets in clear view to ensure there are no adulterants concealed. The donor may be allowed to keep a wallet or billfold during the collections. Purses and other personal items should be stored in a secure location.

Last, be sure the information recorded on the custody and control form is legible. Information should be printed in order for the laboratory to identify the specimen to the correct donor during the testing process.

One Source Toxicology Laboratory recorded 48 errors last week. Out of the 48 errors, 40 of the errors were attributed to the collectors. The remaining eight errors were custody and control forms that were not legible. Even though the laboratory is monitored and regulated by the federal government, the responsibility of the collection process is in the hands of the employer. If the collector is aware of the environment and the donors, the integrity of the drug test is ensured. The collector is always the gatekeeper in the drug testing process.



Remove any items that could possibly adulterate a specimen.



Secure all water sources in the collection facility. Security tape can be placed on sinks to prevent dilution of a specimen.



Have the donor remove all of the contents of his or her pockets before providing a specimen.



The custody and control form must be printed legibly. The laboratory staff identifies and matches the specimen to the donor with the custody and control form.