



# BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet

*Nancy E. Gist, Director*

## Multiagency Response to Clandestine Drug Laboratories

Significant quantities of illegal drugs—including stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens, and narcotics—are produced in clandestine drug laboratories throughout the country. These laboratories often house substantial amounts of highly toxic, corrosive, and explosive chemicals that pose serious health and environmental risks. Unlike other narcotics task force operations, clandestine laboratory enforcement efforts are complicated by the presence of these hazardous materials that call for augmentation of traditional procedures to effectively address health, occupational safety, and environmental concerns. Because of the expertise required for various aspects of laboratory seizures and prosecutions, coordination of resources and programs among a multi disciplinary team of Federal, State, and local agencies is of the utmost importance.

### Background

In 1987 the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) of the U.S. Department of Justice provided funds to five State and local agencies to develop and implement demonstration clandestine laboratory enforcement programs (CLEP's) covering all phases of planning, investigation, seizure, arrest, prosecution, dismantling, waste removal, and remediation of contaminated property. The collective experience of these demonstration sites served as the basis of the Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement Program, providing a foundation on which other jurisdictions can design their own successful clandestine laboratory enforcement efforts. The program was created with BJA funding in 1987 and facilitated by Circle Solutions, Inc., an employee-owned company specializing in health and social services management consulting.

### Key Program Elements

The multidisciplinary approach to creating safe and effective CLEP's calls for performance of the following activities:

- ❑ Creation of a multidisciplinary planning team to develop a strategy and coordinate the roles and responsibilities of the participating agencies. This team includes representatives from the fields of law enforcement, health, hazardous materials, environment services, and, in some cases, child protective services.
- ❑ Development of interagency agreements or memoranda of understanding that address the CLEP purpose, goals, objectives, scope of authority, funding, pay, benefits, personnel, media relations, and shared distribution of forfeited assets.
- ❑ Selection and training of personnel, including a program coordinator, a financial investigator, a prosecutor, law enforcement personnel, fire department hazardous materials teams, health department personnel, and environment/ecology department personnel.
- ❑ Selection and required use of personal protective equipment.
- ❑ Establishment of procedures for regular medical screening and surveillance of personnel and for the collection of related data.
- ❑ Development of a system to monitor the sale and distribution of the precursor chemicals essential to the production of controlled substances.
- ❑ Development of policies and procedures for clandestine laboratory cleanup, disposal of

contaminated materials, cleanup of residual contamination, and securing of the site.

- Development of community education and awareness programs that familiarize the general public with the warning signs and dangers of clandestine laboratory operations.

The successful implementation of a multiagency CLEP requires that all participants be committed to the systematic execution of these activities.

## Program Services

BJA makes training and technical support available for State and local law enforcement agencies interested in developing an effective approach to clandestine drug laboratory enforcement through its grant-funded service provider Circle Solutions, Inc. Circle Solutions, Inc., staff are experienced in training, technical assistance, information systems management, research, and education.

**Training.** Tuition-free training is provided to interested law enforcement agencies. Courses usually are held regionally with coordination through a specific local agency. Agencies are taught how to overcome obstacles, such as lack of investigative expertise and conflicting agency mandates, by applying a multidisciplinary approach to clandestine drug laboratory enforcement. The following courses are offered on an ongoing basis and can be customized to agency needs:

*Introduction to Comprehensive Clandestine Drug Laboratory Enforcement* covers the following topics in a 1-day (8-hour) session:

- Overview of clandestine drug laboratories.
- Compliance with Federal and State health, safety, and environmental regulations.
- Components of a comprehensive CLEP.
- Strategic planning approach to clandestine laboratory enforcement and cleanup.
- Practical steps to implementing a comprehensive program.

*Strategic Planning for Clandestine Drug Laboratory Enforcement* covers all of the introductory course topics and provides an opportunity for attendees to develop specific action plans designed to implement a multiagency CLEP. Additional topics included in this 2 1/2-day course are:

- Developing a mission statement.
- Selecting a program coordinator/manager.
- Identifying funding sources and options.

- Writing policies and procedures.
- Determining agency and staff roles and responsibilities.
- Implementing communication strategies.
- Preparing a training plan.
- Developing a health and safety plan.
- Formulating an evaluation strategy.

For information about how to register, see the “For Further Information” section.

**Technical Assistance.** In addition to offering the two training courses, Circle Solutions, Inc., can provide limited technical support at no cost to law enforcement agencies implementing multiagency CLEP’s. Technical support is usually given over the telephone, but it can be provided on site, if necessary. Assistance is provided in policy and procedure development, strategic plan development, referrals to expert personnel from BJA’s CLEP demonstration sites, and training program followup. For more information about this limited technical assistance, contact Circle Solutions, Inc., at the address provided in the “For Further Information” section.

## Clandestine Laboratory Resource Publication

The BJA monograph *Developing a Strategy for a Multi-agency Response to Clandestine Drug Laboratories* is designed to help State and local law enforcement officials plan, organize, and manage a comprehensive clandestine laboratory enforcement program. The publication is intended to complement existing training programs by addressing the strategy planning process that allows the operational tasks to take place. To assist policymakers in formulating their own CLEP components, this publication presents sample language from policies and procedures developed by BJA demonstration sites.

The monograph concludes with a list of sources for further information, including BJA demonstration sites, Federal agencies, publications, training programs, and BJA contacts.

To obtain a copy of this monograph, contact the Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse at the address or telephone number listed in the “For Further Information” section.

## Program Results

The BJA-funded Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement Program has proven successful by providing services

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that have increased awareness among law enforcement and other public safety agencies of the hazards and difficulties involved in investigating drug laboratories and of the need for intergovernmental coordination at all levels. In addition, these agencies have acquired a heightened awareness of Federal laws pertaining to toxic waste cleanup.

### **For Further Information**

For additional information about the training programs, including availability and registration information, or about obtaining technical support, contact:

**Circle Solutions, Inc.**

Suite 450  
2070 Chainbridge Road  
Vienna, VA 22182  
Tel: 1-703-902-1225

For all other information, contact:

**Bureau of Justice Assistance  
Law Enforcement Branch**

633 Indiana Avenue NW.  
Washington, DC 20531  
Tel: 1-202-514-5943

**Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse**

P.O. Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20849-6000  
Tel: 1-800-688-4252  
Fax: 1-301-251-5212  
Bulletin Board System: 1-301-738-8895  
Internet: look@ncjrs.aspensys.com

**U.S. Department of Justice Response Center**

Tel: 1-800-421-6770

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