

Provincial Laboratory Services Standing Order Policy Implementation – Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why was this policy created?

A: The Provincial Laboratory Medical Services (PLMS) received feedback from BC practitioners that the process for handling Standing Orders was inconsistent. Laboratories across different regions had varying practices, leading to confusion and inconsistency across BC. This policy standardizes Standing Order processing, allowing care providers to plan their patients' care more effectively and navigate the laboratory system more efficiently.

Q: Who participated in the development of this provincial Standing Order policy?

A: Led by PLMS, the policy development committee consisted of representatives from each of the Health Authorities laboratories, LifeLabs, Doctors of BC, and the Ministry of Health – Laboratory and Blood Services Branch.

Q: How was the decision of applying a 12-month expiry on Standing Orders made?

A: Previous communications from the Medical Services Commission in 2003 to physicians indicated that Standing Orders would default to a 12-month expiry, but this was not consistently implemented by laboratories across BC. A recent environmental scan of the current practice for Standing Orders across Canada¹ indicates:

- Ontario Ministry of Health: standing orders are valid for 6 months.
- Alberta: standing orders are not allowed; instead, the patient is to bring the original requisition to each collection visit (up to 1 year from the initial visit).
- Manitoba: standing orders are restricted to INR blood tests.
- Nova Scotia: standing orders are valid for 1 year.

Q: When does this new Standing Order Policy come into affect?

A: January 1, 2024

Q: What happens with existing Standing Orders received at the laboratory before January 1, 2024?

A: All existing Standing Orders received at a specimen collection site will be processed as requested. Any Standing Orders received after January 1, 2024, with no expiry date listed or an expiry date longer than 12 months, will be defaulted to 12 months from the effective date on the requisition.

¹ No information was found for Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, PEI, Newfoundland, Yukon, NWT, Inuvik.