CDC Specimen Test Order and Reporting (CSTOR) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) For Submitters

Last Updated: May 2026

Contents

General Information

About CSTOR and Submitters

What is CSTOR?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Specimen Test Order and Reporting (CSTOR) Web Portal is a central online resource to submit specimens, access test results, and view reports. CSTOR is available at no cost to CDC Infectious Disease (ID) laboratory partners (including the Association of Public Health Laboratories). Please refer to the CSTOR Web Portal page for additional information.

Who can submit specimens via CSTOR?

Approved primary submitters (i.e., global submitters) can submit specimens to CDC. Original or intermediate submitters are also able to submit specimens to CDC with State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) approval. Original or intermediate submitters include:

- Private healthcare providers.
- Local public health and commercial laboratories.
- Hospitals, medical centers, and universities.
- Veterinary offices and animal clinics.
- Non-state and non-federal healthcare organizations that submit specimens to CDC for testing.

Original or intermediate submitters who are interested in onboarding are encouraged to visit the CSTOR Original Submitter Onboarding (COSO) page to learn more prior to completing the REDCap request form.

State health departments or federal organizations who are interested in submitting specimens to CDC via CSTOR and have not yet approved as global submitters can contact the Infectious Diseases Specimen Submission (IDSS) Help Desk.

What is SAMS?

SAMS is a federal information technology (IT) system that gives authorized personnel secure access to non-public CDC applications. The SAMS partner portal is a website designed to provide centralized access to public health information and computer applications operated by the CDC

How many users can an organization have in CSTOR?

Organizations must have at least two active Lab Users/Lab Administrators at all times to prevent any discontinuity due to personnel changes. To onboard the initial two Lab Administrators, please contact the CSTOR Team. Once the initial two Lab Administrators are onboarded, they can add as many additional Lab Users or other Lab Administrators for their organization as needed in CSTOR's 'Manage Organization' module.

Do I have to pay to onboard or use CSTOR?

CSTOR is available at no cost.

What is the difference between the 'Lab Administrator' and 'Lab User' roles in CSTOR?

Lab Users: Can request Test Order Requests (TORs), create/edit specimen submission forms, ship packages, check status, receive reports, and access the dashboard and training/helpful resources.

Lab Administrators: Can request TORs, create/edit specimen submission forms, ship packages, check status, receive reports, and access the dashboard and training/helpful resources (like Lab Users). Lab Administrators can additionally access the 'Manage Organization' module, where they can add/remove users in their organization and edit the organization level information. If your organization has original submitter organizations onboarded in your jurisdiction, Lab Administrators also have access to the 'Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction' module, where they can access the 'Original Submitter Onboarding' tab and the 'Test Order Request Permissions Management' tab, to approve/reject pending original submitter onboarding request or manage which TORs require SPHL review and approval prior to original submitters being allowed to submit directly to the CDC, respectively.

Where can I find CSTOR training materials?

CSTOR training material can be found by selecting the 'Training' module within the CSTOR Web Portal. Training materials include both written user guides and video CSTOR demos. If you have any additional questions not addressed in the training materials, please contact the CSTOR Team.

Who do I contact if I have questions about shipments, specimens, etc.?

For test order specific questions, please refer to the CDC Test Order Directory (TOD) Point of Contact (POC) list. For general questions, please email the CSTOR Team.

CSTOR Functionality

Creating Test Order Requests

How do I know whether a TOR is auto approved or requires CDC pre-approval? What does this mean?

After you select a test order name or code, the TOR creation pop-up on the right-side displays whether CDC pre-approval is required. If the selected test order requires approval, "CDC Lab Pre-Approval is required for this Test Order" will appear, including a link to the CDC TOD for more information under the blue informational 'i' icon.

The "CDC Pre-Approval Needed" field in the CDC TOD shows whether a test order is automatically approved or requires pre-approval. If a test is auto approved, you will immediately receive approval and will be allowed to input

specimen information. If a test requires pre-approval, the TOR will be 'Pending CDC Approval,' and you must wait until approval is granted before submitting the specimens to the CDC.

What happens when I create and submit a TOR that is auto-approved?

If a TOR is auto-approved, it will appear as 'Approved' in CSTOR. You may continue with the submission process by finding the TOR in the 'Approved Test Order Requests' tab in the 'Submit Specimens' module and using one of our four specimen information import methods.

What happens when I create and submit a TOR that requires *CDC* pre-approval?

For test orders that require pre-approval by the CDC, submitting your TOR will trigger an email to be generated to the Test Order's POC to initiate a review of your TOR. Your TOR will be in a 'Pending CDC Approval' status. CDC Test Order POCs will have the opportunity to approve (with optional comments) or reject (with required comments). This approval process is managed within the CDC's Enterprise Laboratory Information Management System (ELIMS). When your request is approved or rejected, you will receive an email alert. If approved, the TOR will appear in the 'Approved Test Order Requests' tab in the 'Submit Specimens' module and you may then continue with the specimen submission process in CSTOR.

Does everyone in my organization receive email notifications after creating a TOR?

Currently, TOR-related system notifications are only sent by default to the individual that created the test order. However, additional notification recipients can be specified by CSTOR Lab Administrators in the 'Manage Organization' module's 'Organization Notification Preferences' section. Additionally, all users can see the status of TORs submitted by anyone in their organization in the 'Organization Test Order' sub-tab of the 'Test Order Request' tab in the 'Check Status' module. Users can additionally see approved TORs for all members of their organization in the 'Organization Requests' tab of the 'Approved Test Order Requests' page in the 'Submit Specimens' module.

How do I know if the TOR is rejected?

TORs that are rejected will re-appear as drafts in either the 'My Draft Requests' or 'Organization Draft Requests' tabs of the 'Create Test Order Requests' module. The status will read 'Draft- Previously Rejected' and a rejection comment will provide additional guidance. Users will have the option to go in and delete the TOR if they no longer need it or they can edit and re-submit it.

Submitting Specimens and Shipping Packages

How do I know which specimen submission fields are required for the Test Order I am submitting?

The information required for a test order is noted within the CDC TOD in the 'Supplemental Information Required' field. The TOD page is linked in the draft specimen grid by a blue informational [i] icon in the 'Submit Specimens' module within CSTOR.

Does CSTOR validate incoming data?

CSTOR retains the same validation as found on the 50.34 Specimen Submission Form and the Global File Accessioning Template (GFAT), which includes drop-down lists for some field values and formatting requirements for fields such as dates, times, etc.

If I submitted the TOR, can my colleague complete and submit the specimen submission information or prepare the package for shipment?

Yes, colleagues in your organization can access TORs you've submitted in the 'Organization Requests' tab within the 'Approved Test Order Requests' page in the 'Submit Specimens' module, allowing a colleague to provide specimen submission information for a TOR that you initially created. Anyone in your organization can access all specimens created in your organization in the 'Available Specimens for Shipment' grid in the 'Ship Package' module, allowing seamless cooperation between colleagues.

Can I include supplemental files with my submission?

Yes, there are currently two options to upload supplemental files:

- At the TOR level, by selecting the 'Attach File' button when creating or editing a TOR
- At the specimen level, by selecting the attachment icon in the 'Specimen Form(s)' pop-up in the draft TOR grid

What happens if a package was addressed to the wrong laboratory?

If a package was shipped to the correct shipping address but with the wrong laboratory labeled, CDC Specimen Triage and Tracking Team (STATT) is able to correct the label and direct the package to the correct laboratory.

Can CSTOR be used to ship specimens to the CDC in Atlanta and other locations?

Yes. CSTOR can be used to submit specimens to the Atlanta, Georgia; Fort Collins, Colorado; and San Juan, Puerto Rico CDC locations. CSTOR can additionally be used to ship packages for rabies or viral special pathogens testing, if the specimens are included in a separate physical box, and the shipping destination includes Rabies or VSPB respectively.

Checking Status of TORs and Packages

When do I receive a notification from CSTOR via email?

You will receive an email notification when your pending TOR has been approved or rejected by the CDC, when your package has been received at the CDC, if you have a "Needs Attention" tile that requires specimen data correction, or when a new report is released for a specimen you created.

What do the TOR statuses mean in the 'Check Status' module?

- **Approved**: TOR is auto-approved or has received required pre-approval from the test order's CDC point of contacts
- **Draft**: Test order has not yet been submitted to the CDC
- **Pending CDC Lab oratory Approval**: TOR requires pre-approval from the CDC and is awaiting approval from the CDC POC
- **Rejected by CDC Laboratory**: TOR has been rejected by the test order's CDC POC

What do the Specimen statuses mean in the 'Check Status' module?

- **Accessioned**: Specimen is being accessioned by CDC
- **Attention**: Specimen has been flagged as needing correction (pre-accessioning) by the CDC
- **Corrected**: Specimen has been flagged as needing correction (pre-accessioning) by the CDC has been corrected by someone in your institution
- **Draft**: Specimen has not yet been included in a package submitted to the CDC
- **In transit**: Specimen is in a package that is in transit to the CDC but not yet received
- **Received**: Specimen is in a package that has been received by the CDC but not yet accessioned

What do the Package statuses mean in the 'Check Status' module?

- **Draft**: Package has not been submitted, i.e., is not yet shipped
- **In transit**: Package is indicated in transit to the CDC ("Ship Package" within the 'Ship Package' module selected)
- **Received**: Package has been received by the CDC

Viewing Results and Reports

How can I review and export results using CSTOR?

Once specimen test results and reports are approved for release, they can be accessed in CSTOR's 'View Reports' module. To export results, highlight the desired rows and click the 'Export Selected Rows' button. To view or download a copy of the PDF report, click on the paper [PDF] icon in the far right of the desired row.

Can I hide reports that have already been viewed?

Yes, you can archive reports that have already been viewed. In the 'View Reports' module on CSTOR, select the [eye] icon to hide a report from view from everyone in your organization. To see all reports in your grid, including those hidden from view, select the 'Include Hidden Reports' checkbox in the top right corner.

Why is my report not showing up in CSTOR?

There are several reasons your report might not be showing up in CSTOR:

- The "Include Hidden Reports" checkbox may not be selected, and one of your colleagues may have hidden the report from view.
- Your report may be dated far enough in the past that it is not displaying immediately on the first page of the "View reports" tab. Select the time interval dropdown on the right corner of the page and then select the time range that your report was likely submitted during.
- The incorrect organization may be selected in the dropdown menu in the upper-right corner next to your name, especially if you are a member of multiple organizations (for example, SPHL with multiple locations or divisions set up as separate accounts).
- The report may have been released outside of CSTOR using a hard-copy PDF or another non-enterprise CDC report delivery method. In those cases, contact the CDC testing laboratory directly for assistance accessing the report.

You may also view the View Reports User Guide within the 'CSTOR Training and Helpful Resources' page ([?] in the top right) for more information. If you are still struggling to find your report, reach out to the CSTOR Team.

Who gets notified when there is a new report available? How do I control who gets notified?

When a new report is available, an email notification is sent to the user listed on the specimen submission form in the 'Institution POC Email' field *and* any users that are set up in the 'Manage Organization' module in the 'Report Notification Email' section. To control who gets email notifications when a new report is available, add or remove users from this list using the 'Add Email' button or the red 'X' button, respectively.

Does CSTOR deliver reports directly to OS for specimens they submit directly to CDC via CSTOR?

CDC currently delivers reports in CSTOR only to state or federal level organizations. SPHLs who have Original Submitter organizations onboarded under their jurisdiction to CSTOR can then choose to release the report back to the Original Submitter in the 'View Reports' module, or continue to use their previously existing report delivery workflows outside of the CSTOR system to deliver results/reports back to organizations in their jurisdiction, regardless of whether those organizations submitted the specimens to CDC via CSTOR

CSTOR Lab Administrators

Managing My Organization

How do I request to add a new user in my organization?

CSTOR Lab Administrators can add or remove users in the CSTOR 'Manage Organization' module. Select 'Add User' and complete the required fields. You may also view the 'Manage Organization' user guide within the 'CSTOR Training and Helpful Resources' page ([?] icon in the top right) for more information.

Can I remove a Lab Administrator from my organization?

Yes, Lab Administrators can remove users from the organization, including other Lab Administrators, as long as at least two Lab Administrators remain active in CSTOR.

How can I change a user's role from Lab User to Lab Administrator or vise-versa?

An existing CSTOR Lab Administrator can change another user in their organization's user role using the edit [pencil] icon next to that user's name in the Users grid in the 'Manage Organization' module.

If I have access to multiple organizations, is there an option to select which organization I can log in to?

Yes. If a user has access to multiple organizations, they will be prompted to select which organization they wish to log into when accessing the CSTOR Web Portal. Users can also set one organization as their default by selecting the checkbox on the login pop-up. To change the default organization, click the settings (gear) icon in the top-right corner and update the preference.

Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction

What level of oversight does the 'parent' SPHL have over OS in their jurisdiction?

Onboarding: The 'parent' SPHL is notified anytime an original submitter in their jurisdiction requests to onboard to CSTOR. SPHL CSTOR Lab Administrators receive an email notification and a new 'Needs Attention' tile on their dashboard. They can review and approve/reject the pending Original Submitter Onboarding Request in the 'Original Submitter Onboarding' tab of the 'Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction' module.

Specimen Submission: The 'parent' SPHL gets visibility into submissions that are being sent in by OS that have onboarded to CSTOR in your jurisdiction. In the 'Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction' module, CSTOR Lab Administrators can specify in the 'Test Order Request Permissions Management' tab which test orders require SPHL review and pre-approval prior to the original submitter being able to submit those specimens to the CDC.

Reporting: Results and reports are delivered only to the state-level organization. SPHLs should continue to use their existing report delivery workflow to transmit relevant reports to the organizations within their jurisdiction.

How can SPHLs control which submissions require SPHL review and pre-approval prior to OS sending in specimens directly to the CDC?

Within the Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction module, CSTOR Lab Administrators can use the Test Order Request Permissions Management tab to define submission requirements for each test order type. Administrators can specify whether submissions:

- Require SPHL review and approval before specimens can be submitted to CDC (Require Pre-Approval),

- Can be submitted directly to CDC without SPHL review (Auto-Approved), or
- Cannot be submitted directly to CDC (Auto-Reject).

If Require Pre-Approval is selected, the SPHL must review and approve the request in CSTOR before organizations within its jurisdiction can submit specimens to CDC.

How can I see specimen information for specimens that have been submitted by OS within my jurisdiction?

From within the 'Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction' module, all users with Approver Permissions can access the 'Test Order Request Approvals' tab. Filtering this tab allows users to see the specimen information for requests that fall within that status:

a) **'Pending' status (default filtering)**: for requests that are pending SPHL review and approval
b) **'Approved' status**: for requests that were submitted and auto approved by the SPHL or were previously approved by the SPHL reviewer
c) '**Rejected' status**: for requests that were previously rejected by the SPHL reviewer

To see specimen information, review the contents of the grid (test order ID, test order name/code, submitting organizations, origin, source type(s), suspected agent, number of samples, who it was submitted by, any submitter comments, the date submitted, the number of attached files, the current status, who it was approved/rejected by, the approval/rejection date, the approval/rejection comments). You can additionally select the 'View TOR Details' button to pull up a pop-up where you can download the associated specimen submission form(s) by:

- Selecting the PDF [paper] icon to individually download a PDF form
- Multi-selecting the checkboxes for your desired specimen forms and selecting the 'Download Selected PDF's' button to download a ZIP file of the specimen forms you marked
- Selecting the 'Download All' button to download a ZIP file of all of the attached specimen forms

How can I control who gets notified when there is a new TOR from an OS in my jurisdiction?

Any user in your organization with the 'Original Submitter TOR Approver Permission' set to 'Yes' in the 'Manage Organization' users' grid will receive an email notification when a new pending TORs has been submitted. To change who has this permission, a CSTOR Lab Administrator can use the edit [pencil] icon in the user's row in the 'Manage Organization' users' grid, then change their 'Original Submitter Test Order Request Approver' permissions in the drop-down of the subsequent pop-up.

How can I control who has the ability to review and approve or reject a TOR from an OS l?

Any user in your organization with the 'Original Submitter TOR Approver Permission' set to 'Yes' in the 'Manage Organization' grid can review and approve or reject a request when a new pending TOR has been submitted by an

original submitter in your jurisdiction. To change who has this permission, a CSTOR Lab Administrator can use the edit [pencil] icon in the user's row in the 'Manage Organization' grid then change the user's 'Original Submitter Test Order Request Approver' permissions in the drop-down of the subsequent pop-up.

How do I manage who can approve OS onboarding requests?

CSTOR Lab Administrators can approve onboarding requests from OS in your jurisdiction, while CSTOR Lab Users cannot. To change who has the CSTOR Lab Administrator user role, a CSTOR Lab Administrator can use the edit [pencil] icon in the user's row in the 'Manage Organization' grid then change the user's role to or from 'Lab Administrator' in the drop-down of the subsequent pop-up.

How do OS request to onboard to CSTOR?

OS within your jurisdiction can request to onboard using the CDC's secure CSTOR Original Submitter Onboarding Request Form hosted on REDCap. This form contains questions surrounding the original submitter's organization information (address, phone, email), organization director information, and information for their two desired CSTOR Lab Administrators. Once the form is submitted, it goes through an initial CSTOR help desk review then an email is sent to the parent SPHL's CSTOR Lab Administrators for SPHL review and approval in the 'Original Submitter Onboarding' tab of the 'Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction' module.

Can I set SPHL default POCs to be included on specimen forms from OS?

Yes, a state level POC is required in all submission forms submitted by OS in your jurisdiction. In the new 'Set SPHL POC Defaults' tab in the 'Manage Orgs in My Jurisdiction' module, Lab Administrators can specify at the SPHL, CDC unit, and/or at the individual test order levels which SPHL POC is included on specimen forms from OS in your jurisdiction. If a test order level POC is specified, it will be included as the SPHL POC name and email on specimen forms. If no test order level POC is specified, the Unit level POC is included. If neither a test order level nor a unit level POC is specified, the SPHL wide POC is included.

Need Additional Help?

Please refer to:

- SAMS Enrollment Guide
- SAMS Help Desk: Open between the hours of 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM EST Monday through Friday (excluding U.S. Federal holidays) or call Toll Free: (877) 681-2901
- CSTOR Enrollment Guide
- Contact the CSTOR Team