Meeting Summary

OPTN
Organ Procurement & Transplantation Network

OPTN Histocompatibility Committee Meeting

Date: 8/11/2026
Time: 12:00 – 1:00 PM ET
Host: HRSA OPTN Meetings
Purpose: Review and finalize guidance regarding implementation of recent World Health Organization (WHO) HLA nomenclature changes and their impact on OPTN policy, UNet data entry, and organ allocation processes.

Meeting Attendees

Organization	*Name(s)*
HRSA	Stephanie Grosser
OPTN Histocompatibility Committee Members (voting)	Gerald Morris Kelley Hitchman Michael Gautreaux Hugo Kaneku Taba Kheradmand Helene McMurray Bobbie Rhodes Clark Jerome Saltarrelli Lakshmi Samidurai Nicole Valenzuela
OPTN Histocompatibility Visiting Board Members (non-voting)	Ken Chavin Cathi Murphey
OPTN Meeting & Logistics Contractor	Hammad Aslam Kristin Blank Lindsey McEntee Vanessa Treanor

Action Items

Action Item	*Owner(s)*	*Due Date*
Submit finalized HLA nomenclature guidance to Board leadership for review	HRSA	8/12/2026
Board leadership to review finalized HLA nomenclature guidance	Board Leadership	9/1/2026
Continue to collaborate on future OPTN nomenclature table updates and implementation planning, both during meetings and asynchronously on OPTN 360	Histocompatibility Committee	Ongoing

Meeting Notes and Key Decisions

Meeting Notes

Opening Remarks and Administrative Updates

- The Chair welcomed committee members and stated the meeting's goal is to review HHS and legal counsel's feedback on the draft OPTN guidance document that the Histocompatibility Committee drafted in response to recent nomenclature changes issued by the WHO HLA Nomenclature Committee

- The Chair welcomed new committee members and noted that regular committee work would resume soon
- HRSA explained the OPTN 360 platform is new for volunteers and acknowledged committee feedback regarding document editing permissions; HRSA stated that future committee documents will be configured so all committee members have editing access for asynchronous review and collaboration
- OPTN Meeting and Logistics Contractor confirmed the meeting achieved quorum

Review of HHS and Legal Counsel Feedback on Draft HLA Nomenclature Guidance

- The Chair explained that the committee originally developed the guidance document in June and had since received comments from HHS and legal counsel; the Chair noted that most comments were not substantive policy changes but rather clarifications intended to ensure the document did not overstate OPTN authority or mischaracterize existing policy
- A committee member agreed with many of the proposed responses to HHS comments and felt they appropriately reflected transplant laboratory operations; the committee member noted that histocompatibility laboratories often perform testing in both donor and recipient roles, requiring flexibility in how testing language is described
- Committee members generally agreed that the proposed committee feedback responses adequately addressed HHS comments related to HLA testing requirements and donor typing; no additional substantive revisions were proposed for the opening sections of the document

Terminology for the WHO HLA Nomenclature Committee

- The Vice-Chair raised a concern related to terminology used throughout the guidance document; the Vice-Chair noted that the document abbreviated the "World Health Organization Nomenclature Committee for Factors of the HLA System" as "WHO," which could imply that the nomenclature decisions represented the position of the entire World Health Organization rather than a specific nomenclature committee
- A committee member agreed that the abbreviation could create confusion but acknowledged that lengthy committee names are commonly shortened in scientific publications for readability
- Committee members discussed several alternatives, including "WHO," "Nomenclature Committee," and "WHO HLA Nomenclature Committee"; the Chair stated that specifying "WHO HLA Nomenclature Committee" would provide additional clarity while distinguishing the committee from the broader WHO organization
- The committee agreed to replace references to "WHO" throughout the document with "WHO HLA Nomenclature Committee"

Scope of the Guidance Document

- A committee member emphasized the importance of using terminology that aligns with accreditation standards and laboratory practice so that end users would clearly understand the guidance; the committee member questioned whether wording that described the guidance as intended to "assist laboratories" might imply a recommendation rather than a requirement
- The Chair clarified that the document is guidance rather than policy and is intended to provide laboratories with information about how OPTN and UNet will operate during the nomenclature transition period; the Chair emphasized that the committee was not attempting to impose new regulatory requirements through the guidance document

- Committee members discussed the importance of distinguishing between existing policy requirements and informational guidance; the Chair reiterated that policy changes would be developed separately through standard OPTN processes

Regulatory Alignment and Laboratory Accreditation Considerations

- A committee member expressed concern that laboratories must comply with Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) requirements and accreditation standards that require use of WHO nomenclature; the committee member noted that laboratories would need clear instructions regarding how OPTN expectations align with those requirements during the transition period
- The Chair stated that the guidance's purpose was limited to helping laboratories understand what nomenclature should be entered into UNet while larger accreditation and implementation discussions continue among American Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics (ASHI), CAP, and other stakeholders; the Chair emphasized that broader compliance issues would need to be addressed through ongoing coordination among professional organizations
- A committee member noted that the accreditation community continues to have conversations and that future guidance from ARB and other organizations may evolve as consensus develops

Application of New WHO Nomenclature and Reporting Practices

- A substantial portion of the meeting focused on how laboratories should apply the new nomenclature ahead of future updates to OPTN reference tables and software tools
- A committee member described potential conflicts between current vendor software outputs, WHO-designated antigens, and existing OPTN equivalency tables; the committee member noted that some WHO antigen assignments have changed and questioned which designations laboratories should follow during the interim period
- The Chair replied that the guidance was intended to maintain current operational practices until future table updates occur; the Chair explained that future OPTN table revisions will address nomenclature changes more comprehensively
- A committee member discussed the operational burden laboratories may face as they attempt to manually add newly recognized serologic equivalents to reports generated by vendor software; the committee member noted that some laboratories rely heavily on automated reports that cannot easily accommodate recent nomenclature updates
- The Chair acknowledged implementation challenges but emphasized that laboratories should continue maintaining documentation consistent with existing reporting practices as they prepare for future nomenclature adoption

Review of WHO Nomenclature Tables and Summary Guidance

- The Vice-Chair displayed portions of the WHO nomenclature tables and explained that the committee's recommendations focused specifically on recognized serologic and cellular specificities included in Table 3; the Vice-Chair noted that the guidance was intentionally limited and does not attempt to address every nomenclature element introduced by WHO
- The Chair explained that committee discussions during spring and early summer identified practical limitations related to associated antigens, heterodimers, and other nomenclature elements that many laboratories currently cannot report consistently; the Chair stated that limiting the guidance to Table 3 allowed the committee to provide practical recommendations while avoiding requirements that laboratories cannot currently support

- A committee member commented that the table clarified the intent of the guidance and demonstrated that the recommendations were narrower and more flexible than originally anticipated; the committee member cautioned, however, that laboratories may still apply nomenclature differently until OPTN updates its supporting tables and software resources

Clarification of Molecular and Serologic Reporting

- The Vice-Chair suggested adding language that clarifies that the guidance applies only when laboratories choose to report serologic nomenclature and does not replace molecular nomenclature reporting; the Vice-Chair expressed concern that laboratories could misinterpret the guidance as requiring conversion of existing molecular reporting practices
- The Chair agreed that additional clarification would reduce confusion, particularly because committee members themselves had raised questions about interpretation
- A committee member noted that some laboratories currently report molecular nomenclature only and should not interpret the guidance as requiring a change in reporting methodology
- Committee members agreed to add language throughout the guidance that clarifies that molecular nomenclature reporting remains acceptable and that the recommendations apply specifically when laboratories report serologic nomenclature

Associated Antigens, Heterodimers, and UNet Reporting

- The Chair stated that associated antigens, heterodimer combinations, and similar nomenclature constructs currently cannot be applied consistently across all donor typing scenarios; the Chair emphasized that many laboratories would require higher-resolution typing capabilities to report those values reliably
- The committee agreed that associated antigens and heterodimer nomenclature should not be entered into UNet at this time and should instead be addressed in future policy and table updates

Future Implementation and Table Updates

- The Chair reviewed implementation language describing the committee's intent to update OPTN reference tables in the future to better align with WHO nomenclature; the Chair noted that some antigen assignments and serologic splits will require additional committee review and policy work
- A committee member asked whether OPO laboratories would need a grace period to adjust reporting practices after publication of the guidance
- The Vice-Chair responded that laboratories that currently report molecular nomenclature remain compliant under the guidance; the Vice-Chair noted that the recommendations primarily affect situations where laboratories elect to use serologic nomenclature
- Committee members reviewed examples of laboratory reports and discussed how software-generated nomenclature data are currently uploaded into UNet and DonorNet; the discussion confirmed that existing molecular reporting workflows would remain acceptable under the guidance

Approval of Updated HLA Nomenclature Guidance Document

- Vote: OPTN Histocompatibility Committee approves the updated HLA nomenclature guidance
  - Result: 10 Approve, 0 Reject, 0 Abstain
- The vote satisfied quorum requirements and authorized submission of the guidance to Board leadership

- The Chair thanked committee members for their flexibility, feedback, and participation; the Chair noted that future committee work will focus on updating OPTN tables and implementing the new nomenclature within operational systems