



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES  
*Aging and Long-Term Support Administration*  
*PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600*

May 28, 2020  
**Amended June 3, 2020**

**AL TSA: NH #2020-037**

**AMENDED COVID-19 TESTING OF RESIDENTS AND STAFF OF NURSING HOMES**

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

Nursing homes have been, and continue to be, severely impacted by COVID-19. The vulnerable adult population residing in congregate living in a healthcare setting have inherent risks, which requires aggressive efforts to limit COVID-19 exposure and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within nursing homes.

The Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) have issued guidance recommending numerous COVID-19 prevention and control measures in nursing homes, including guidance related to restricting visitors and implementing screening measures for staff and residents. This letter outlines a new requirement under Secretary of Health [order](#) 20-02 for all nursing homes to offer and administer a baseline test of all residents and staff for COVID-19. The testing will help show the scope and magnitude of COVID-19 infections in these facilities and help inform COVID-19 prevention and control efforts to limit transmission among residents and staff.

**Under the order, facilities must:**

- Offer COVID-19 tests to all residents and staff by June 12, 2020, and administer tests to all consenting residents unless the nursing home has completed universal testing for COVID-19 since April 1, 2020. Written consent from the resident or resident representative is preferred;
- Require all staff to be tested for COVID-19 and administer tests to all staff, except those who provide medical justification for declining testing from a licensed health care provider. For the purposes of testing, a staff member is any employee, contractor, volunteer, or other personnel who provides health care, personal care, social, administrative, clerical, dietary, environmental, or any other kind of services in the facility;
- Contact DOH at [doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov](mailto:doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov), for assistance as soon as reasonably possible if, after diligent efforts, the facility is unable to arrange for the administration of tests by legally authorized individuals;
- Comply with all applicable laws when offering tests to, requiring tests of, administering tests to residents and staff, including, but not limited to, any laws governing residents' health care decision-making;
  - In accordance with 42 CFR 483.10(c), WAC 388-97-0260 and other resident rights statutes and rules, residents (or their representatives) have a right to be informed of, and to consent to or refuse any proposed medical treatment, including this testing process.
- Ensure timely and proper submission of test specimens to authorized laboratories along with all information the laboratories require to perform the tests, report test results, and obtain payment;
- Immediately report positive test results for residents and staff to:
  - The Local Health Jurisdiction; and

- The Department of Social and Health Services (at 24/7 Hotline: 1-800-562-6078 or Online reporting: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/residential-care-services-online-incident-reporting> or Email: [CRU@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:CRU@dshs.wa.gov) or Fax: 360-725-2644).

The State of Washington will provide test kits and personal protective equipment (PPE) for administering tests to every resident and staff member of the facility at no cost. Facilities will not need to request these. The PPE and test kits will be sent in separate shipments. Facilities should begin receiving test kits and PPE by June 6, 2020. Directions and a Frequently Asked Questions will be included in the test kit package. Staff members not employed by the facility must be tested and should request testing from their employer or personal health care provider, for example, temporary staffing agencies must pay for testing of their staff.

If a facility does not receive enough test kits or PPE to provide tests to all residents and staff, it will not be deemed in violation of this order for not providing tests to all residents and staff if the facility uses every test it can safely administer and promptly notifies DOH at [doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov](mailto:doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov).

#### **Testing information:**

- Facilities are responsible to ensure the testing is done by a person(s) qualified to administer the test.
- A licensed healthcare practitioner order **is required** for all resident and staff testing (Licensed healthcare practitioners include medical doctor, advanced registered nurse practitioner, or physician assistant).
- Test requisitions must include complete insurance information on specimens submitted for all residents. For residents without insurance, write "UNINSURED" where the type of insurance is requested.
- Insurance information is not required for staff as DOH will pay for staff testing. Test requisitions must clearly delineate staff from residents by writing "STAFF" where the type of insurance is requested.
- Instructions for proper packaging and mailing the test kits to the laboratories will be included with the test kits.
- Facilities must send all resident and staff test samples to one of the two following DOH-contracted laboratories:
  - Facilities located in Regions 1 and 2 must send their staff samples to UW Virology Testing.
  - Facilities located in Region 3 must send their staff samples to Molecular Testing (Vancouver).
- Facilities must NOT send tests to the State Public Health Laboratories.
- HIPPA Privacy and Novel Coronavirus information can be found at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/february-2020-hipaa-and-novel-coronavirus.pdf>

#### **Test result information:**

- All test results will be returned to the ordering provider or facility.
- The ordering provider or their designee must report the test results to the tested resident or staff.
- The provider and facility must immediately report all positive test results to the Local Health Jurisdiction for case investigation, contact tracing, and isolation and quarantine support.

#### **Reimbursement information:**

- Test kits and the PPE needed to administer the tests are provided by DOH at no cost to facilities. Shipments to facilities will spread out over several days. Facilities should collect and submit specimens as soon as possible after supplies are received so that laboratories are not overloaded and are able to process tests efficiently.
- Facilities are not obligated to pay laboratories for tests performed for residents or staff. Laboratories will obtain payment from:
  - The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) for tests performed for those residents and staff who are covered by Medicare and Medicaid.
  - The state of Washington will pay laboratories for tests performed for staff who are not covered by Medicare or Medicaid.
- There is no shipping cost for facilities to submit specimens to the DOH-contracted laboratories identified above. Shipping is pre-paid.

**Questions and answers:**

- 1) What should a facility do if a staff member refuses to be tested for COVID?
  - The employer must comply with all applicable laws when offering, requiring or administering tests to staff. Facilities are responsible for managing staff refusals, but may contact RCS field managers for guidance.
- 2) Whom do I contact if I have additional questions about how to administer the COVID test, collect the sample and prepare for shipping to a lab?
  - Send questions regarding testing, samples and labs to [doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov](mailto:doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov). Questions will be triaged by DOH for response.
  - COVID-19 testing information including a YouTube video with instructions for specimen collection is available at the following DOH website: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020COVID19/HealthcareProviders>
- 3) What if I need help finding a qualified healthcare practitioner to assist with administering tests to staff and residents?
  - Facilities must:
    - Identify a licensed healthcare practitioner to order COVID-19 tests; and
    - Identify staff to collect specimens and ensure the staff are trained by a licensed healthcare practitioner or using the webinar below.
  - The DOH infection prevention team will host a specimen collection process webinar on June 9, 2020, 10:00 am – 11:00 am. The webinar is provided for long-term care facilities required to conduct COVID-19 testing under Secretary of Health order 20-02, and will be recorded. To participate in the webinar or to receive a copy of the recording, register at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4374205108227093003>. If you have questions about the webinar, please email [HAI-COVID@doh.wa.gov](mailto:HAI-COVID@doh.wa.gov).
  - For additional information on how to collect a nasal or nasopharyngeal specimen, visit: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020COVID19/HealthcareProviders>. For questions, please email [doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov](mailto:doh-cbts.imt@doh.wa.gov).
  - DOH has enrolled and activated emergency volunteer health practitioners for the COVID-19 response. Please follow this link for instructions on requesting a volunteer: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020COVID19/HealthcareProviders/EmergencyVolunteerHealthPractitioners>
- 4) What do I do if a staff person tests positive?
  - All positive cases must be reported to the Local Health Jurisdiction.

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- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has recommendations about when symptomatic or asymptomatic staff can return to work and how they can do so safely: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html>
- nursing homes are required to notify all residents, their representatives, and family members when there is a single confirmed infection of COVID-19 from staff or residents. Details about the reporting requirements is in memo [QSO-20-29-NH](#).

Please see [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for further information.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Herke, Nursing Home Policy Program Manager, at (509) 209-3088 or [lisa.herke@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:lisa.herke@dshs.wa.gov).

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director  
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"