



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

August 3, 2020

AL TSA: NH #2020-049
POINT-OF-CARE TESTING AND WEEKLY TESTING PRESS RELEASES

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

The purpose of this letter is to provide information about two announcements made by Health and Human Services (HHS).

- On July 14, 2020, a [press release](#) announced an initiative to increase testing in nursing homes. Through the initiative, HHS will send rapid point-of-care testing instruments and tests to nursing homes.
- On July 22, 2020, a [press release](#) announced mandatory weekly testing for nursing home residents and staff under certain conditions.

The announcements did not offer specific directions for State Agencies to provide any additional guidance. Residential Care Services (RCS) is seeking more information. We will provide it as we receive it. What we do know is discussed below.

Point-of-Care Testing:

Each nursing home will receive one diagnostic instrument – either the Quidel Sofia 2 Instrument (<https://www.quidel.com/immunoassays/sofia-tests-kits/sofia-2-analyzer>) or the BD Veritor Plus system (<https://www.bd.com/en-ca/offerings/capabilities/microbiology-solutions/point-of-care-testing/veritor-plus-system>) along with the associated tests. Following the initial distribution, nursing homes can procure additional tests directly from the respective manufacturer. Both of the testing instruments use antigen tests that can provide results in minutes. All nursing homes must have the capability to screen and test residents at baseline, and test staff on a weekly basis or according to specific guidance by the state and local health jurisdictions. This procurement will also enable testing of visitors if appropriate for that facility.

Distribution will begin with nursing homes prioritized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The prioritization is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) epidemiological hotspot data, as well as nursing homes that have reported the following information to the CDC by July 5th:

- Three or more confirmed or suspected new cases of COVID-19 within the last 7 days.
- At least one new COVID-19 case in the last 7 days after having zero previous COVID-19 cases.
- Inadequate access to testing within the last 7 days.
- At least one new resident death due to COVID-19 within the last 7 days.
- At least one new confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case among staff within the last 7 days.

Facilities that do not have a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment (CLIA) Certificate of Waiver to administer the tests **will not** receive a testing instrument. Many nursing homes in Washington State have a CLIA certificate.

- If your facility has a medical testing CLIA license, you can fill out a test menu change form to add COVID testing to your existing license:
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/505088.pdf>
- If your facility does not have a medical testing CLIA license, you can fill out an application to obtain a CLIA certificate:
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/portals/1/Documents/Pubs/505038.pdf>

It is important to follow up on the status of your CLIA certificate to be ready to receive a testing instrument.

Weekly Testing

Building on the rapid point-of-care diagnostic testing devices that will be distributed to nursing homes, CMS will begin requiring, rather than recommending, that all nursing homes in states with a 5% or greater positivity rate (the percentage of people who test positive for the virus of those overall who have been tested) test all nursing home staff each week. Additional federal funding has been made available for the testing (information about the funding is in the July 22 press release), and those funds may be used to test visitors in some cases. This new staff testing requirement will enhance efforts to keep the virus from entering and spreading through nursing homes by identifying asymptomatic carriers.

According to the Washington State Department of Health [website](#), as of 07/27/2020, the positivity rate for Washington State was over 5%.

The press release did not provide information about when and how the weekly testing mandate will be implemented.

We understand there are many questions about these two initiatives, and we appreciate your patience as we seek answers.

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.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"