



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

**Unified Area Command, Testing Task Force,
Congregate Living**

Eric Shope, SNF Coordinator

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Dear Nursing Home Administrators:

The State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Health have been and continue to provide COVID-19 testing to Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) across the state who choose to utilize it.

As this effort has progressed some issues have emerged, and we are addressing them with the goals of the testing cycle being:

I. **Test Kit Delivery**

We will have the laboratory assigned to each facility, assemble and deliver specimen collection kits to all registered participants. The number of kits delivered is based on the staff and residents who are registered according to the intake forms linked in the July 7, 2020 memo sent to all administrators. Staff and residents are to be separately registered. If any person(s) who have registered are not to be tested in each week, the administrator is responsible to send an email notifying MDH of the need for the registration to be deactivated for the current testing cycle. The email should be sent to the address linked in the July 7 memo. At this point in time, not all registrations in the system are complete. All fields on the intake form must be filled completely. Many results are sitting in the lab's system because of missing identifiers. Administrators must be sure that registrations and all fields are complete for every individual to be tested. Any incomplete registrations will

not be processed for testing moving forward. The processing of tests is being impacted by incomplete registrations. The labs will only issue specimen collection kits to a facility based on the number of complete registrations available in the system. Calls for additional kits will not be honored.

II. **Collection of Specimens within 48 hours**

The goal is to collect specimens within 48 hours of receipt of kits. Kits are being delivered between Thursday and Sunday each week. Once a facility has their kits, they should begin collecting specimens. All specimens must be collected no later than COB each Tuesday. Late specimens will be processed when the lab can get to them without interrupting the processing of timely submitted specimens. Interruptions to processing of timely specimens is causing delays in providing results. The labs will no longer interrupt their processing to pick up or process late specimens.

III. **Providing Timely Results**

The labs continue to work to process specimens and return results in the contracted 48-hour timeframe. Interruptions to the process addressed above continue to impact the lab's ability to provide you with the results you need, when you need them. Again, incomplete registrations will no longer be provided with specimen collection kits, and late specimens will no longer be processed until all timely specimen results have been reported out.

Each SNF is responsible to provide weekly testing for staff and for residents if the facility is currently dealing with an outbreak. If a facility is not getting State funded testing completed due to incomplete registrations or late specimens, then that facility must arrange for and complete weekly testing on their own.

The State funded testing process described above is meant to provide an avenue for facilities to meet the weekly testing requirements as set forth in the June 25 memo. This process was not designed to address outbreaks at the time they are identified by facilities and Local Health Departments (LHD).

To address the issue of newly identified outbreaks which require testing outside of the weekly testing cycle, facilities must work with LHDs to determine the number of specimen collection kits needed. LHDs will then need to contact CIAN lab to communicate the number of needed

collection kits. Again, calls from a SNF directly to the lab will not be honored. CIAN lab will assemble and deliver those kits to the facility based on direction from the LHDs. The kits will arrive without pre-printed labels or requisitions. The facility will need to manage the collection of those specimens, ensure all requisitions and labeled specimens are filled out completely and accurately before returning them to the lab. This process is being provided outside of the weekly testing process.

In the next weekly testing cycle, if the residents are appropriately registered prior to the Tuesday COB deadline, collection kits for residents will be delivered as part of the next weekly testing cycle. Typically arriving at the facility within 2-5 days after the registration deadline each week.

Finally, as directed in the July 24 Amended Directive and Order Regarding Nursing Home Matters, SNFs are directed to communicate their ongoing testing plans to MDH. Prior to August 14, 2020 all SNFs should email their testing plan to mdh.covidlabresults@maryland.gov

As always, thank you for your efforts in caring for Maryland's most vulnerable residents.

If you have questions, please reach out to your assigned Liaison within our Communication Team. National Guard and MDH Liaisons are standing by.

Sincerely,
Eric Shope,
SNF Coordinator

