



MEMORANDUM
August 7, 2020

TO: Senior and Post-Acute Care Providers

FROM: Kevin Heffner, CEO and President, LifeSpan
Joseph DeMattos, Jr. CEO and President, HFAM
Allison Cibrowoski, CEO and President, LeadingAge Maryland

RE: Testing Requirements in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living
Communities with More Than 50 Beds

This memorandum is to summarize the changes that the State will be implementing regarding weekly testing in nursing homes and assisted living communities with more than 50 beds as of August 15th, and to provide you with options for moving forward. ***Please note that this memo does contain information from the Maryland Department of Health released late last night (August 5th) regarding alternative testing plans and a new contact information for contracting with the University of Maryland Pathology Associates (UMPA).***

As you know, in the Amended Directive and Order Regarding Nursing Home Matters (July 24, 2020) and the Amended Directive and Order Regarding Assisted Living Program Matters (July 24, 2020), the Maryland Department of Health stated that it would only provide testing support until August 15th. Beginning that date, organizations are either required to: 1) continue to conduct approved weekly testing (without State financial support); or 2) adhere to an approved clinically rigorous alternative testing plan (without State financial support). Plans for either conducting weekly testing or adhering to an alternative testing plan MUST BE SUBMITTED by August 14th to mdh.covidlabresults@maryland.gov.

While we do not believe that it is financially feasible to mandate and shift the cost of weekly COVID-19 testing of employees and staff to the provider community, we wanted to ensure that you are aware of the options afforded to you by the State (and have correct contact information) and announce an additional option for procuring testing supplies.

- Testing by the University of Maryland Pathology Associates (UMPA): On Monday, August 3rd, the State announced that it has negotiated a price of \$40 per specimen

through UMPA. **For those interested, you must contact the University of Maryland at MDTESTING@som.umaryland.edu, where you will receive an intake form to submit for review or 1-667-214-2110.** ** Please note that the name/email in the attached letter to the Associations (dated August 3rd) and through additional emails is incorrect. This is the fourth revision to the contact information.

- **Association Partnership with DML and Aeon:** In order to assist with minimizing the cost and shortening testing turnaround times, the Associations have partnered with two regional labs in the State - Diamond Medical Labs in Baltimore County and Aeon in Allegany County. Because knowing test results quickly is critical, **Diamond and Aeon's turn-around time for test results is just 24 - 48 hours**, which can mean the difference between an effective response or a missed opportunity to contain an outbreak. Both labs are CLIA accredited and Maryland certified, and both build on experience and a proven track record of delivering reliable results quickly. Additional tests, such as those to identify COVID-19 antibodies, are also available. Working to keep the price per test at the barest minimum without sacrificing quality or results time, Diamond and Aeon labs are offering a discounted price of \$75 per test to those facilities who mention LifeSpan, HFAM, or LeadingAge Maryland. For more information on how your facility can utilize the labs under this partnership, please contact apbeacon@lifespan-network.org.
- **Alternative Testing Plan:** Again, as part of the July 24th Amended Directives and Orders, nursing homes and assisted living communities were instructed to either submit: 1) a plan for weekly testing; or 2) a clinically rigorous alternative testing plan. Last night, MDH released guidance on the meaning of "alternative." As stated "[t]his guidance for alternate testing plans simply allows a facility with no COVID-19 outbreaks to use POC testing for weekly staff testing," meaning that facilities must be prepared by August 15th to continue to conduct weekly testing either by PCR assays through the facility's contracted-with laboratory or through POC testing (if other factors are also satisfied).

Again, the Associations recognize that the additional financial and administrative burden of testing, while often beneficial and necessary, is nevertheless an added cost that most organizations will be hard-pressed to afford, especially given continuing PPE costs and heroes pay. We feel strongly that our members should never have to sacrifice the safety of residents or staff because of a delay in getting test result information, nor should they have to make a choice between quality and time. The Associations will continue to advocate for increased funding for organizations for testing and for a more appropriate testing plan. **In the meantime, after you consider the above options, please make sure that you submit your plan with the appropriate information to MDH by August 14th. Thank you.**