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10/11/21
 Memo: PCR Confirmation of rapid COVID-19 tests [UPDATE]

Dear Humboldt County Medical Provider,

This is an **update** to the memo on this topic dated 8/17/21. With the rapidly changing COVID-19 testing environment, and a significant increase in demand for COVID-19 testing, Public Health recommends an updated approach to a positive COVID-19 result using a rapid testing platform. **Any rapid COVID-19 result on a rapid antigen or rapid NAAT platform no longer needs PCR confirmation or PCR for whole genomic sequencing (WGS) with few exceptions.** This will ensure timely isolation of all positives; both symptomatic and asymptomatic positives should isolate immediately upon a positive rapid test result. This approach will also help to conserve resources that are currently strained under current testing volume.

Applies to fully vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.

Rapid Ag/NAAT result^	Symptomatic?	PCR needed?	Isolate?
Positive	Yes	No	Yes
Positive	No	No*	Yes
Negative	No	No	No
Negative	Yes	No*	Clinical decision**

^Rapid platforms that might require PCR confirmation include BinaxNOW, Abbott ID NOW, LIAT, CUE.

* Hospitals, skilled nursing facilities (SNF), and residential care facilities of elderly (RCFE) should still send PCR confirmation for asymptomatic positive workers/residents or symptomatic negative workers/residents. This is Priority Level 1.

** If there is a high clinical suspicion for COVID-19 based on symptoms or exposure, and another diagnosis is not more likely, consider isolation and repeat testing with either rapid testing within 48-72 hours or PCR immediately if available. Anyone with a rapid result who is symptomatic in hospital, SNF or RCFE should get PCR immediately (Priority 1) and isolate until PCR results return.

Please see "Humboldt County Health Advisory on COVID-19 Public Health Laboratory Testing (10/11/2021)" (attached) for updates on priority of PCR testing at Humboldt County Public Health Lab. Unless designated Priority Level 1 by Public Health, we recommend using available testing programs in the community including private labs, pharmacies, state sponsored sites such as Optum (<https://lhi.care/covidtesting>) and the state testing program available through the Testing Task Force (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>). For settings with CLIA-waiver, rapid tests can be requested through MHOAC system

Hospitals should continue to send PCR confirmation of COVID-19 inpatient admissions to Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory for whole genome sequencing (WGS).

We thank you for everything you are doing to care for our community in this very difficult time.

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For any questions, call the Humboldt County Public Health Communicable Disease Program at 707-268-2182

HEALTH ADVISORY

October 11, 2021

COVID-19 Public Health Laboratory Testing

Effective Date: 10/18/2021

SITUATION As you know, we are continuing to see significant COVID-19 activity in our region, which is driving demand on testing capacity. The Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory (HCPHL) has ramped up testing and would like ideally to run between 150-200 specimens per day, with volume each day dependent on the timing of specimens arriving at the lab. This will allow our team to continue to provide rapid PCR results to Priority Level 1 and support Public Health and outbreak investigations. Public Health recommends using available testing programs in the community for groups in priority level 2 and 3, including private labs, pharmacies, state-sponsored sites such as Optum (<https://lhi.care/covidtesting>) and the state testing program available through the Testing Task Force (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>). For settings with CLIA-waiver, rapid tests can be requested through MHOAC system. Our Optum site is sending samples directly to the state lab in Valencia. There is significant capacity at Optum and turnaround time has been averaging 72 hours.

IMPORTANT UPDATE The HCPHL continues to accept specimens for testing. Given increasing demand on HCPHL services and the changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are revising the *Humboldt County COVID-19 Testing Prioritization Chart* to reflect the current situation and capacity.

The HCPHL will focus on Priority Level 1 to ensure the fastest turnaround time for these risk groups locally. As capacity allows and with *pre-authorization*, we will also accept Priority Level 2 specimens. Note that we will no longer accept Priority Level 3 specimens, and these should instead be sent to the numerous testing options available (see above). **Please record the priority level on the requisition.**

As cold and flu season hits, you will be seeing more symptomatic patients. Our testing at the HCPHL uses a multiplex test that looks for SARS CoV-2, Flu A and Flu B simultaneously. This will be an important tool for ongoing flu surveillance. We also have an RSV option, if RSV is suspected. Please indicate that in the requisition, and we will run samples using this test. These tests are limited and should be reserved for patients that are 5 years old or younger.

We remind you that the COVID-19 surveillance project in partnership with CDPH is on-going. If your site is interested in participating in the project to help us better understand COVID-19 transmission, please contact Eva Weinstein at eweinstein@co.humboldt.ca.us. Participation only requires consent of your patient, followed by a phone call and modified lab order. Follow-up would consist of an 8-10 minute phone call to collect information. This is an important resource and tool to monitor for other respiratory pathogens in our region as the respiratory season approaches.

SPECIMEN COLLECTION Please contact the HCPHL directly if there are any specific questions regarding specimen collection or submission requirements at HCPHL@co.humboldt.ca.us or (707) 268-2179.

- Please contact the lab courier phone at 707-499-4513 to schedule a routine courier pick-up; please leave a voicemail with details of pick-up. The HCPHL has a dedicated COVID courier who picks up multiple times a day. Just call the courier phone number and leave a message.
- Please note, we have been receiving some specimens with incomplete and/or missing forms, as well as requisitions packaged in with the specimens. Please separate the specimen from the requisition for staff safety. Missing information or incomplete submission will delay testing results.

Humboldt County COVID-19 PCR Testing Prioritization Chart

Effective Date: 10/18/2021

PRIORITY 1: Ensures continuity of healthcare system operations and protects from spread of COVID-19 in high-risk settings. Helps to facilitate PPE preservation, infection control measures, and protect healthcare workforce and vulnerable populations. Appropriate identification of individuals where disease control decisions (i.e., isolation and quarantine) are paramount for containment in a high-risk setting.

– **HCPHL is currently only accepting Priority 1 Specimens for PCR testing.**

Interfacility Transfers: Those awaiting “clearance” testing for transfer to another facility, e.g., Sempervirens, SNFs, incarceration (regardless of symptoms).

Congregate settings: Symptomatic or exposed individuals residing or working in congregate living facilities such as SNF/LTCF, incarceration, shelters.

Healthcare Workers: Regardless of exposure, symptomatic healthcare workers (including EMS).

Hospitalized: Patients who are hospitalized with symptoms consistent with COVID.

PRIORITY 2: Ensures those at highest risk of complication of infection and those in higher risk settings are rapidly identified and appropriately triaged. Helps to ensure the essential services workforce. HCPHL recommends using available testing programs in the community for these groups, including private labs, pharmacies, state sponsored sites such as Optum (<https://lhi.care/covidtesting>) and the state testing program available through the Testing Task Force (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>). For settings with CLIA-waiver, rapid tests can be requested through MHOAC system. Please see attached rapid test algorithm for when a PCR follow up is needed.

First Responders: Symptomatic first responders including law enforcement and fire.

Critical Infrastructure: Symptomatic individuals whose occupation is part of critical infrastructure.

High Risk: Symptomatic individuals who have risk factors, such as age over 65 or comorbidities, which put them at heightened risk for severe illness, and other populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 such as tribal and Latinx community.

Schools: Persons working in or attending on-site instruction.

Sectors with high risk of large outbreaks: Agricultural settings, manufacturing, food processing and including places of worship.

Close contacts to a case: All close contacts should be tested 3-5 days after exposure, regardless of vaccination status. Symptomatic close contacts to confirmed cases can be run on a rapid platform first (Abbott ID NOW, BinaxNOW, Carestart). If negative, repeat with rtPCR test through available community PCR testing.

PRIORITY 3: Individuals not falling into the categories above. HCPHL recommends using available testing programs in the community for this group, including private labs, pharmacies, state sponsored sites such as Optum (<https://lhi.care/covidtesting>) and the state testing program available through the Testing Task Force (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>). For settings with CLIA-waiver, rapid tests can be requested through MHOAC system. Please see attached rapid test algorithm for when a PCR follow up is needed.

Workplace surveillance*: Asymptomatic screening of unvaccinated staff working in any setting. This includes staff from unvaccinated HCW or other unvaccinated staff mandated to test weekly or twice weekly. Surveillance in places of risk for spread or mandated by local, state or federal guidelines.

Travel or pre-entry screening: Any testing related to venue entry or travel or other recreational purpose, such as sports.

*Public health does not recommend routine surveillance of fully vaccinated asymptomatic/unexposed staff at this time.

Workflow for COVID-19 PCR Testing Through the Humboldt County Public Health Lab

1. Only test individuals who fall into Priority Level 1 on the Humboldt County COVID Testing Prioritization Chart. Priority 2-3 specimens should be sent to available testing programs in the community, including private labs, pharmacies, state sponsored sites such as Optum (<https://lhi.care/covidtesting>) and the state testing program available through the Testing Task Force (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>). Priority 2 specimens *may* be accepted on a case-by-case basis if capacity allows and in consultation with Public Health. For all levels, ask if the patient is interested in participating in a 10-15 minute phone interview to help us better understand virus transmission locally and across the state. If patient is willing, mark the “Surveillance Project” box and ensure that a single best phone number is on the order requisition. Please call 707-268-2180 to provide patient name and phone number to our HSU project coordinator.
2. Collect the sample
 - a. Use a single NP swab or other fully synthetic swab.
 - b. An anterior nares swab may be used in place of an NP swab.
 - c. Anterior nares swabs may be observed self-collection. NP swabs should be done only by a trained provider.
3. Complete the Humboldt County laboratory requisition form.
 - a. The requisition form must include the priority level (1-3 using the prioritization chart) on the requisition.
 - b. Any submission other than Priority Level 1 will need prior approval by Public Health.
 - c. Please ensure the requisition is complete and include a demographics sheet. Samples without completed requisitions will be frozen for testing until the completed requisition is submitted.
4. Contact the Humboldt County Public Health Lab's courier line at 707-499-4513 and leave a message requesting pickup.
 - a. The courier picks up samples Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.
 - b. On a case-by-case basis, our courier will pick up samples in the afternoon.
 - c. Please leave a message on the courier phone to request supplies and urgent pick-ups.
 - d. Submitters can drop off samples directly to the HCPHL at 529 I Street during normal business hours.
5. Results are generally available within 24-72 hours of receipt of the sample. Large-volume demand may extend to 96 hours.
 - a. All results will be sent electronically or faxed to the established single point of contact for your facility.
 - b. Positive results will be communicated by phone to the established single point of contact for your facility.