



Humboldt County Public Health is writing to inform you of changes to the Public Health Lab COVID-19 PCR testing program going forward. Due to currently having open capacity at the Public Health Lab, we are opening the HCPHL to Priority 2 testing starting December 20th, 2021. Please see the attached Document “Humboldt County COVID-19 Testing Prioritization Chart, Effective Date: 12/20/2021”.

Additional changes to the Prioritization Guidelines include:

- All out of state travel being classified as Priority 1 (this is a change from just international travel)
- Close contacts to a case are no longer in Priority 2
- Patients must be symptomatic to qualify as Priority 2 (this is a change for “Schools” and “Sectors with High risk of Large outbreaks”)

This change in priorities allows for the us to make the most efficient use of the HCPHL’s resources. Additionally, it will allow for the quickest testing turnaround time on the most vital cases for keeping our community’s vital infrastructure open and operational and will allow for HCPHL to monitor for changes in circulating variants. **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.

When your facility is in required response testing, we ask that you continue to contact HCPHL and alert PH by email the volume of samples to expect each day (CVDnurse@co.humboldt.ca.us & HCPHL@co.humboldt.ca.us) before submitting specimens.

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. 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 encountering 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: 12/20/2021

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 accepting Priority 1 and Priority 2 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.

Out of State Travelers: Anyone with a history of out of state travel within the previous 14 days (note travel dates and states/countries on requisition).

PRIORITY 2: Symptomatic persons in a higher-risk setting. 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. These are for symptomatic persons only and can include confirmation of a rapid antigen positive.

– HCPHL is currently accepting Priority 1 and Priority 2 Specimens for PCR testing.

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: Symptomatic persons working in or attending on-site instruction.

Sectors with high risk of large outbreaks: Symptomatic persons from an agricultural setting, manufacturing, food processing and including places of worship.

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.

Anyone in priority 2 who does not have symptoms.

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.

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 (unless otherwise included above).

*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 send PCR specimens for individuals who fall into **Priority Level 1 and Priority Level 2** on the Humboldt County COVID Testing Prioritization Chart. Priority 3 specimens should be tested at 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 3 specimens *may* be accepted on a case-by-case basis if capacity allows and in consultation with Public Health. **For all levels, if you would like to enroll the sample in the California Respiratory Virus Sentinel Surveillance Project (CaSRVSS) mark the "Surveillance Project" box on the requisition and ensure that a single best phone number is on the order requisition to contact the patient for a follow up interview.**
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 or 2 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.
 - d. Please note any international or out of state travel history (dates, countries, states) on the requisition form to help expedite WGS.**
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.