

## HEALTH ADVISORY

April 7, 2020

### COVID-19 Public Health Laboratory Testing

**SITUATION** The Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory (HCPHL) is accepting specimens for testing. Please note, testing capacity is still limited. We currently have capacity to run specimens on approximately 50 individuals per day. Although capacity is limited, we want to help you in your efforts to test patients who, in your clinical judgement, are possible COVID-19 cases.

**IMPORTANT UPDATE** The HCPHL no longer requires a CDC PUI number for testing, nor will we require pre-approval and clinical consultation to authorize testing. However, in order to manage the large volume of testing submissions, and to prioritize testing we are asking that providers assign samples a priority level based on the attached *modified* CDC priority guidance. The HCPHL will focus on Priority levels 1 through 3 to ensure fastest turn-around time for these risk groups locally. **Please record the priority level on the requisition.** Please note, if samples are not indicated with a priority level, they will automatically be assigned priority level 4 and tested accordingly.

Based on guidance from the CDC and the California Department of Public Health, Humboldt County Public Health has approved symptom-based clearance for all patients. To help us preserve resources, we ask that you not submit samples for COVID clearance. For the same reason, we request that you avoid duplicate testing for COVID (sending simultaneously collected samples from a single patient to multiple laboratories) and repeat testing (requesting multiple tests for a single patient).

We want to emphasize that Public Health IS NOT collecting test samples from patients on site. Please DO NOT send patients over to PH to be tested. We recognize the advantages of being able to test outside of the clinical setting and are working with partners to see what will work in our community and with our current resources. We will keep you informed.

#### **Specimen Collection**

A single NP swab in standard viral media is the preferred specimen

Anterior nares specimens are acceptable if NP cannot be done.

Must be collected by a healthcare provider or by patient with healthcare provider supervision

Swab the anterior portion of both nares with the same foam nasal swab. Placing the swab in the nostril and pressing gently against the back of the nostril, rotate the swab in a circular motion two times, then hold in place for 15 seconds. Repeat this process for the second nostril. Place the foam swab into transport media.

Please **DO NOT** send sputum sample on any COVID patient.

Keep sample refrigerated (4°). All samples should be transported to the HCPHL as soon as possible. Freeze sample if hold time exceeds 72 hrs.

Viral test collection kits are provided to your lab. As we receive specimens, we replace the kits for your lab. However, in the absence of a pre-packaged kit, all you need is your NP or nasal swab and a viral media tube. Do not use the viral kits provided by HCPHL to submit your specimens to commercial labs.

Sterile Saline is an acceptable transport media – PHB has plenty of this for our community (in partnership with HSU who is making it for Humboldt PHB) – Jeremy Corrigan, PHB Lab Manager is Point of contact for this media.



A lab requisition must be completed and accompany the swab. This requisition can come from an Electronic Health System, or it can be the PHB paper form. A PUI number is no longer required for submission - PHB is using a *modified* CDC priority guidance.

Please provide a demographic sheet with the requisition when available

Please include the full first and last names of the ordering provider

Please keep the sample separated from the requisition for safety

Your collection supplies are replaced as they are used. However, if your site runs low, please contact the HCPHL directly to request additional collection supplies at – (707) 268-2179. Again, only as many as are used will be given do to PHB's limited supply.

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. PHB has a dedicated COVID courier and picks up multiple times a day – just call the courier phone number and leave a message.

### **Current Testing Capacity**

50 tests / day – Testing Monday - Saturday – Turn-around time is 48-72 hours.

PHB will attempt to increase to 55-60/day the week of April 6, 2020.

### **Swabs**

There are very few nasopharyngeal swabs available. All sites serviced by PHB are encouraged to assist with this limitation if possible by donating any NP swabs not matched up to media. These may be given directly to the PHB courier.

Please note, we have been receiving some specimens with incomplete and/or missing forms as well 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.

**The Humboldt County Public Health would like to thank all of our partners for their continued cooperation and communication. Having requisitions filled out appropriately and samples collected and labeled correctly allows our staff to focus on testing rather than correcting problems.**

**Thank you for your hard work and cooperation during this pandemic response.**



# Humboldt County COVID Testing Prioritization Chart

**PRIORITY 1:** Ensures optimal care options for all hospitalized patients, lessen the risk of healthcare-associated infections and protect workforce

**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

**Contacts:** Symptomatic close contacts to a COVID-19 case

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

**Congregate Settings:** Symptomatic individuals residing in congregate living facilities such as jails, shelters, long-term care facilities

**High Risk:** Symptomatic individuals who have risk factors, such as age over 65 or comorbidities, which put them at heightened risk for severe illness

**PRIORITY 3:** Help to ensure the essential services workforce

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

**PRIORITY 4:** Individuals not falling into the categories above whose symptoms are consistent with COVID

- \* This priority level should be tested through a commercial laboratory to ensure testing through public health is available for priority levels 1-3
- \* If you are not sure about how your patient should be prioritized, please call the PH Communicable Disease line at 268-2182. After hours, please contact Sheriff Dispatch for the Health Officer.

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

1. Test individuals who fall into priority levels 1-3 on the Humboldt County COVID Testing Prioritization Chart.
2. Collect the sample
  - a. Use a single NP swab or other fully synthetic swab.
  - b. An anterior nares swab may be used if an NP swab cannot be done.
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. Please ensure the requisition is complete and include a demographics sheet. Samples without completed requisitions will be frozen for testing when 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 multiple times each day Monday through Saturday.
5. Results are available within 48-72 hours of receipt of the sample.
  - a. All results will be sent electronically or faxed to the established single point of contact for your facility.
  - b. Positive results will be called to the established single point of contact for your facility.