



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

HEALTH ADVISORY

November 25, 2020

COVID-19 Public Health Laboratory Testing

SITUATION As you know, we are seeing a significant acceleration of COVID-19 activity which is driving an increased demand on testing capacity. HCPHL has ramped up testing and is running 200-300 specimens per day with volume each day dependent on the timing of specimens arriving into the lab. Because the lab does runs of 94 samples at a time, we try and “fill” runs to maximize capacity. Our Optum site is now sending lab specimens directly to the new state lab in Valencia. This lab has a contract guarantee for 48 hour turnaround from time of receipt. Transportation time from Humboldt to Valencia lab will increase turnaround times. Therefore, we have asked for and been granted expanded Optum services which we hope will lessen turn around times. These new assets are slated to begin the first and second week of December. We anticipate our local testing capacity will more than triple with this expansion. In addition, we continue to work on establishing our regional testing site at UIHS which will expand capacity further.

IMPORTANT UPDATE The HCPHL continues to accept specimens for testing. In light of increasing demand on HCPHL services, we are revising the *Humboldt County COVID-19 Testing Prioritization Chart* to reflect the contact investigation priority areas referred to in the provider alert of 11/23/20.

The HCPHL will focus on Priority levels 1 and 2 to ensure fastest turnaround time for these risk groups locally. As capacity allows and with *pre-authorization* we will also accept priority 3. Note that we will no longer accept Priority level 4 specimens, and these should instead be sent to a commercial laboratory. **Please record the priority level on the requisition.** As local prevalence increases, and cold and flu season hits, you will be seeing more symptomatic patients. We ask that in lower risk individuals (i.e. those not in priority groups 1-3), you send specimens to your commercial lab. This will preserve in-house testing for the highest risk settings and individuals. Symptomatic patients should isolate at home while waiting for results as outlined in provider alert of 11/23/20.

We want to emphasize that Public Health IS NOT routinely collecting test samples from patients on site. Please DO NOT send patients to Public Health to be tested. We recognize the advantages of being able to test outside of the clinical setting and are actively working with partners to expand collection capacity. We will keep you informed.

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 Dr. Ennis, jennis@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.



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Specimen Collection

• Acceptable Sample Types:

- NOT Leaking- double check cap is secure before placing into sealed specimen bag.
 - A single nasopharyngeal (NP) swab collected by a healthcare provider in standard viral media is the preferred specimen; OR
 - An anterior nares (nasal swab) specimen collected by healthcare provider or by supervised onsite self-collection (using a flocked or foam swab); Swab both nares with a foam nasal swab, then place into transport media; OR
 - A nasal mid-turbinate swab collected by healthcare provider or by supervised onsite self-collection (using a flocked tapered swab), then placed into transport media.
 - Please DO NOT send sputum sample on any COVID patient.
- All **specimens** *MUST* be labeled with the following:
 - Patient name
 - Patient DOB
 - Date and time of collection
- 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 labs. 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 laboratories.
- 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 requisition form.
 - Please provide a demographic sheet with the requisition when available
 - Please keep the sample separated from the requisition for safety
 - Please fill-out all demographics information including name, DOB, address and phone number. For those willing to participate in the COVID-19 Surveillance Project, please check the "Surveillance Project" box, double-check accuracy of phone number for follow-up purposes, and call 707-268-2180 to provide a patient name and number.
 - **Incomplete requisition will result in delayed testing**
 - **Required information:**
 - **Ordering physician**
 - **Submitting agency**
 - **Name of patient**
 - **Patient address and phone number**
 - **DOB**
 - **Date and time of collection**



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- **Source of collection**
 - **Condition of specimen**
 - **Priority level**
- Your collection supplies will be 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 due to HCPHL'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. HCPHL has a dedicated COVID courier who picks up multiple times a day – just call the courier phone number and leave a message.

Current Testing Capacity

- 225 tests / day – Testing Monday - Saturday – Turnaround time is 48-72 hours. Large volumes could extend turnaround times to 96 hours.
- UIHS and new Optum lanes will increase capacity even more in the month of December. These assets are expected to come online mid to late December.

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.

The HCPHL 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-19 Testing Prioritization Chart

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

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

Congregate Settings: Symptomatic individuals residing or working in congregate living facilities such as SNFs, incarceration, shelters, long-term care facilities.

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

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

Contacts: Symptomatic close contacts to a confirmed case. Symptomatic household contacts to confirmed cases can be run on Abbott ID Now. If negative, repeat with rtPCR test. Generally, asymptomatic close contacts are not tested although *exceptions* may be considered-especially in high risk settings.

PRIORITY 2: Ensures those at highest risk of complication of infection and those in higher risk settings are rapidly identified and appropriately triaged. Help to ensure the essential services workforce.

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. See provider alert 11/23/20 for more details.

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

PRIORITY 3:

Congregate setting surveillance: Asymptomatic screening of staff working in congregate settings with medically fragile, often elderly patients. This includes staff from SNFs, Hospice, and PACE. May also consider RCFEs.

Symptomatic individuals working in sectors with high risk of large outbreaks such as agricultural settings and including places of worship.

PRIORITY 4: Individuals not falling into the categories above whose symptoms may be 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 1-2 on the Humboldt County COVID Testing Prioritization Chart. Priority 3 specimens will be accepted as long as 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 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 if an NP swab cannot be done. A provider-observed self-collection may be considered. Although some sensitivity is sacrificed (increased possibility of false negative), this collection method should be strongly considered to help alleviate poor surveillance testing compliance due to NP swab discomfort.
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 generally available within 48-72 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 called to the established single point of contact for your facility.

*Individuals not falling into categories above should be tested through your commercial laboratory or can pursue testing at OptumServe. This includes individuals being tested for any “clearance” purposes unless performed explicitly at the direction of Public Health. Inclusive of this are return-to-work policies adopted by employers, or travel-related requests. A notable exception is for pre-op clearance testing. Optum is unlikely to return a timely enough result for pre-op clearance. Other routes to COVID-19 testing are available through community providers.

<https://lhi.care/covidtesting>

888-634-1123