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 Memo: PCR Confirmation of rapid COVID-19 tests

Dear Humboldt County medical provider,

With the rapidly changing COVID-19 testing environment, and a significant increase in demand for COVID-19 testing locally in our current surge, public health recommendations for how to approach a positive COVID-19 result using a rapid testing platform is changing. With our very high local test positivity rate (15% at time of this memo) **any positive result on a rapid antigen or rapid NAAT platform no longer needs PCR confirmation or PCR for whole genomic sequencing (WGS)**. We do still recommend any symptomatic negative result on a rapid antigen or rapid NAAT platform be sent for PCR confirmation. This will ensure timely isolation of all positives (both symptomatic and asymptomatic positives should isolate immediately upon a positive rapid test result) and help to conserve resources that are currently strained under the 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	Yes	Yes

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

\*\*Hospitals and skilled nursing facilities should still send PCR confirmation for asymptomatic positive workers.

As COVID-19 rates in the community decrease and testing resources are less constrained, we will consider returning to more PCR confirmation of rapid platforms as were recommended previously. In the environment of a lower test positivity the likelihood of a false positive increases, leading to more need for PCR confirmation. Previously, we had asked for PCR confirmation on positive rapid platforms also to allow for WGS. Given current volume of positive tests and other state and federal WGS surveillance that has confirmed the Delta variant makes up nearly all current virus circulating in California, these changes are necessary to conserve resources and reduce workloads for our labs and clinicians. Hospitals should continue to send PCR confirmation of COVID-19 inpatient admissions to Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory for WGS.

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

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