

New Testing Program in Nursing Homes and Rest Homes

Updated April 9, 2020

All changes to previously issued information are highlighted.

Program overview and goals

We recognize that our older adult residents, especially living in high-density environments, are some of the people most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Currently, if a resident in a Facility is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, they need to leave their facility to get tested. This exposes them to even greater risk and can overwhelm emergency rooms and clinics.

Nursing homes, Rest homes, and ALRs in Massachusetts are eligible for the program. This program allows for safe, onsite sample collection by either medical personnel at your facility or trained personnel from the Massachusetts National Guard. A hotline has been created for Facilities to request a test for a resident and discuss the best option for testing. Samples collected by medical personnel at your facility will be transported directly to the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard to be processed, and samples collected from the MA National Guard will be transported to the State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) who will work in conjunction with Broad Institute to prioritize the test. Facilities can expect to receive testing results within approximately 2-3 days from when they are tested, which will allow you and your staff to move quickly make necessary changes to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Our goal is to both promote safer and more efficient testing for vulnerable residents as well as provide the information and tools Facilities need to protect them.

What you need to do to participate in this:

Step 1: In-house nurses, employees, or Licensed Independent Providers identify a resident or residents with potential COVID-19 symptoms. The Licensed Independent Provider evaluates the patient and if warranted, orders a COVID-19 test.

- Per the CDC, symptoms include fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing)
- You MUST have orders from a licensed provider to order tests. For facilities with ordering providers on-site (medical directors), the medical director or Licensed Independent provider on-call should be the one ordering the tests. For facilities without ordering providers on-site or associated with the facility, facility employees are responsible for obtaining orders from individuals' providers.

Step 2: Administrator or designee calls mobile testing hotline at 617-366-2350 to 1) schedule an in-facility test or 2) order the test kits to be delivered to the facility (NOTE THE PHONE NUMBER HAS CHANGED)

- The hotline is staffed 7 days a week from 8AM-4PM ET.

Option 1 – schedule in-facility testing (may not be available within 24 hours)

- This option is best for facilities that do not have on-site or affiliated medical personnel that can obtain a specimen from residents. Through this option, you can request personnel (currently deployed by the Massachusetts national Guard) to come to your facility to collect patient specimens.
- The mobile hotline representative will help you decide whether the resident is eligible for in-facility testing through this program. National Guard resources can test symptomatic patients that meet the criteria below:
 - o A new fever OR mild to moderate respiratory illness (indicated by shortness of breath, cough, difficulty breathing)
 - o As described in Step 1 above, a Licensed Independent Provider MUST place an order for the test for a MA National Guard representative to collect samples. If there is no order from a Licensed Independent Provider, the phone representative will ask you to either call back when you have an order or seek testing from an alternative site.
- If your facility is designated by the DPH as an "hotspot cluster" due to the presence of a high number of COVID cases, the National Guard may test all residents and staff in your facility.

Option 2 – request testing kits for your facility

- If your facility has trained health care personnel on-site that can obtain a specimen from residents, our call center is able to send test kits to your facility for specimen collection.
- Where appropriate and a facility believes there has been widespread community transmission in the facility, the facility's medical director may order test kits for the entire facility (both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents and employees). As stated earlier,

an ordering provider is required for every person who is being tested. Through this option, we can only accept one ordering provider for all residents and employees per request – all results will be sent to this one ordering provider.

- Due to supply constraints at this point, we can only provide enough test kits to test everyone at your facility **one time**. Depending on test kit supply, requesting testing for your entire site may delay the fulfillment of your request.
- Residents/employees that tested negative when test kits were originally provided may become symptomatic at later points in time. If previously asymptomatic residents or employees become symptomatic after initially tested, you may order additional test kits just for those symptomatic residents via the call center. You may not re-test asymptomatic residents or employees through this program after they test negative, unless they begin to exhibit COVID symptoms (as described above in Option 1).

Step 3: Print and complete specimen submission form (paper requisition) prior to specimen collection (either by MA National Guard or by on-site healthcare professionals)

If Option 1: Testing by MA National Guard, using State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) form

- Form will collect demographic and clinical information on the resident (see attached)
- One form must be completed for each resident that will be tested.
- This must be completed, PRINTED and attached to the sample. It is extremely important that this information is filled-out in full for proper epidemiological tracking and patient reporting. Ensure the full name of the facility, address, zip code and phone number are on every form.
- **See attached for a copy of this form**

If Option 2: Request testing kits for your facility

- Form will collect patient information
- One form must be completed for each person tested.
- This must be completed, PRINTED and attached to the sample. It is extremely important that this information is filled-out in full for proper epidemiological tracking and patient reporting.
- Facilities will be using the Broad Institute requisition form. This form will be e-mailed to the medical director (ordering provider) indicated on your request and facility after you request test kits, but before the test kits are delivered to your facility. It will be pre-populated with your ordering physician name and facility information, such that you only need to fill in patient name, date of birth and sample information.

Step 4: Specimen collection from patients

Option 1: MA National Guard specimen collection

- National Guard personnel will arrive at the Facility entrance wearing their uniforms and will be equipped with the proper specimen collection kits and PPE.
- Please ensure security is aware of their visit to facilitate easy sign in.

- Please make sure all paperwork is finalized (see step 3) before the National Guard arrives.
- They will then need to be escorted to the resident's room, where they will take a nasopharyngeal swab sample (NP).
- If multiple patients in a building are exhibiting symptoms, they will swab each patient and collect the specimen and SPHL test form.
- Finally, they will walk back to the building entrance and doff their PPE before leaving the building. A red PPE disposal container must be provided by the entrance of each building to allow the National Guard members to dispose of their PPE before leaving.

Option 2: Request testing kits for your facility

- A courier service will be arranged to deliver the specimen collection materials to the facility. The specimen collection kit will include both test kits and also barcodes to label the samples.
- Your licensed health care personnel should bring the test kit to the resident's room while donning PPE and follow CDC guidance on infection prevention and control. When collecting diagnostic respiratory specimens from a possible COVID-19 patient, the health care professional in the room should wear an N95 or higher-level respirator (or facemask if a respirator is not available), eye protection, gloves and a gown.
 - o Facilities without sufficient PPE should use traditional channels to request [\(link\)](#).
- To collect and properly label each test:
 - o Attach provided paired barcodes: one on swab tube and the other on requisition form
 - o Write Patient Name and Date of Birth on swab tube and on pre-filled paper requisition
 - o Nasopharyngeal swab: Insert a swab into nostril parallel to the palate. Swab should reach depth equal to distance from nostrils to outer opening of the ear. Leave swab in place for several seconds to absorb secretions. Slowly remove swab while rotating it. (CDC)
 - o Place swab (break in half) in tube and close tube tightly to prevent leaking
 - o Place tube and paper requisition in bag and seal
- When finished taking patient samples, please call the courier number provided with your test kit delivery to schedule pick-up and delivery to the Broad Institute.

Step 5: Await test results from the MA State Lab/Broad Institute – typically ~2-3 days

- These tests will be managed by the State Public Health Laboratory in conjunction with the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. All tests will be paid for by the state.
- If using MA National Guard resources, the State Public Health Laboratory will communicate the results to the provider indicated on the SPHL specimen submission form and the Local Board of Health of the Facility as soon as they are received.

- If your facility is collecting specimens, the Broad Institute will send a secure e-mail manifest to the ordering provider with the results.

Step 6: Symptomatic individuals should be presumed positive while awaiting test results, and should be isolated

- Please act per established policies and procedures of your Facility.
- Please consult with your local Board of Health for protocols on isolation and/or reach out to the DPH Epidemiology Line (24/7): 617-983-6800.

Step 7: Prepare to test close contacts

- If applicable, contact the hotline to schedule tests for others who have been in close contact with positive cases.