



State of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health
Office of the Secretary

April 1, 2021

**ALL LOUISIANA NURSING FACILITIES
Via Electronic Transmission Only**

This letter provides an update to [October 16, 2020 Louisiana Department of Health \(LDH\) guidance](#) regarding SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing requirements at Nursing Facilities (NF) in Louisiana.

Nursing Facilities (NF) are residences for a vulnerable population most at risk for severe health outcomes associated with COVID-19. When one case of COVID-19 is detected in a nursing facility, there are often other residents and staff who are infected with COVID-19 and can continue to spread the infection, even if they are asymptomatic. Serial viral testing of residents and staff allows for early detection of COVID-19 cases and rapid implementation of infection control measures and continues to be an important tool for preventing COVID-19 transmission in Nursing Facilities. In addition, Nursing Facility residents and staff were prioritized to be among the first recipients of safe and highly effective COVID-19 vaccines. In Louisiana, Nursing Facilities are now reporting that approximately 80% of NF residents statewide have received at least one vaccine dose. Because of the additional protection conferred by NF resident vaccination coverage, LDH is providing updated LDH SARS-CoV-2 testing recommendations for NF residents and staff, as detailed below:

1. LDH updated recommendation for COVID-19 Viral Testing Frequency for NF staff:

Repeat testing of prior negative and untested staff should be continued. Based on [CMS guidelines](#), and [CMS data for parish positivity rates](#), NF staff should be tested twice per week in parishes with $\geq 10\%$ positivity and once per week in parishes with 5-10% positivity. **Per LDH updated recommendations, testing frequency for *fully vaccinated*¹ NF staff working in parishes with $<5\%$ positivity can be reduced to once per month; NF staff working in parishes with $<5\%$ positivity who are not fully vaccinated should continue to be tested once per week.**

¹ People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 ≥ 2 weeks after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or ≥ 2 weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson and Johnson [J&J]/Janssen).

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2. LDH updated recommendation for the use of SARS-CoV-2 antigen tests in NF

LDH October 16, 2020 Interim Guidance for the use of antigen tests in NF is being updated to allow for the use of antigen tests for serial testing asymptomatic residents as well as staff²:

- Antigen tests may continue to be used for symptomatic residents and staff. However, all negative tests from symptomatic residents and staff should be confirmed by PCR.
- Antigen tests may be used for serial testing of asymptomatic residents and staff without the need to confirm a negative result by PCR. However, asymptomatic residents and staff that test positive by antigen test should be confirmed by PCR.

Questions or concerns regarding these requirements should be directed to your Regional OPH staff.

Sincerely,



Joseph Kanter, MD
State Health Officer and Medical Director



Tara LeBlanc
Interim Medicaid Director

² Serial testing in the context of an outbreak may warrant more frequent testing than detailed above. Please contact LDH (InfectionControl@la.gov or [Office of Public Health Regional Offices](#)) for facility-specific guidance.