



Health Alert Network Message 20-23: Electronic Lab Forms & Updated COVID-19 Testing Guidance for OPH State Lab

Origination Date:
March 25, 2020

Revision Dates (list all revision dates):
3/25/2020

Office of Public Health (OPH) State Lab Forms Now Available Electronically and Updated Guidance for COVID-19 Testing at the OPH State Laboratory

OPH State Lab Forms Now Available Electronically

This online tool streamlines the requisition form for submitting samples for COVID-19 testing at the OPH State Lab. The form will electronically capture all the required laboratory and epidemiology information with as few questions and entries as possible.

Infographic on which specimens are appropriate to submit to the State Lab is attached.

Once you are finished entering the information in the Portal, the application will signal you to print the requisition and include it with the sample to submit to the State Lab. You must include the requisition form with the sample.

A more sophisticated, interfaced application is in development, but this temporary solution will provide much needed relief in managing the three paper forms being submitted today.

The portal, upon print, will also trigger a courier pickup with an email to our courier. There is no longer a need to arrange for courier pickup. It will send new provider information be added to the Laboratory Information Management System prior to arrival of the sample. Redundancy is reduced, the clerical steps expedited to process samples without delay.

Points about the application:

- Only for samples sent to the OPH State Lab.
- Only for COVID-19 test orders.

- Does not electronically submit an order to our lab. The printed requisition form must be included with the sample.
- Results are not available in this portal.

The application also includes all the Epidemiology information that used to have to call and share with Infectious Disease Epidemiology. They will still get the information, now through the lab portal.

- There is no longer a need to manually fill out the Lab 96 form or the Epidemiology PUI form, the portal does it for you.

Here is the link to the LAB-EPI-LINK site to fill out and print the requisition form: https://appengine.egov.com/apps/la/LDH/Covid-19_Test_request

The app on your phone or device may be used if the device can print at the end. The app does not save to print later. You may print multiple copies of the requisition as needed for your organization.

For help with the portal, please contact 1-888-345-3858.

Expedited Courier Service. In addition to expediting the paperwork, more direct courier routes have been established to improve service. If your facility will allow, samples should be brought to the door for courier pickup. The courier will call prior to arrival to allow time for the samples to be collected and brought to the door. This will reduce exposures for all.

UPDATE: 03/25/2020:

Continue to report an outbreak of any infectious disease, a positive COVID-19 case, or an urgent non-COVID-19 infectious disease to Office of Public Health at 800-256-2748.

It is still no longer necessary to get approval to send COVID-19 specimens to the State Laboratory. If you have a patient that is appropriate for testing at the State Lab given the criteria below, follow the collection, packaging, and shipping instructions below. Please strictly follow the criteria below to send specimens to the State Laboratory.

Do not call the State lab or the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section (IDEpi) for test results. Test results will be directed to the provider who is provided on the LIMS Submitter form as soon as the test is complete. The State lab and IDEpi are unable to give test results over the phone.

UNCHANGED: Testing at Commercial Laboratories

If you have an ambulatory patient that does not fit the COVID-19 testing criteria for the State Laboratory, please follow all testing and shipping

guidance from the commercial laboratory, including specimen collection, specimen container, and submission criteria.

UNCHANGED: Testing at the State Laboratory

Only the following patients are appropriate for COVID-19 testing at the OPH State Laboratory at this time:

- Hospitalized patients with a severe respiratory illness with no other known cause.
- Suspect outbreak of COVID-19 among associated individuals with recent onset of similar fever and lower respiratory symptoms.
- Recent fever and lower respiratory symptoms in a healthcare worker or first responder with direct contact to a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Suspect COVID-19 in a patient associated with a high-risk setting such as a long-term care facility or a correctional facility.
- Suspect COVID-19 in a deceased patient.
- Suspect COVID-19 in a homeless patient.

UNCHANGED: Updated Guidance for COVID-19 Testing at the OPH State Laboratory Specimen Container(s):

- **Viral Transport Media**
 - All commercially prepared Viral Transport Media is acceptable as long as you are using an acceptable swab.
 - You may NOT use cotton tipped swabs, calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing.
- **In-House Prepared Viral Transport Media**
 - In-House prepared Viral Transport Media (VTM) prepared and validated to meet CLIA requirements is an acceptable alternative.
 - You may NOT use cotton tipped swabs, calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing.

We understand the availability for transport media is an immediate concern. Our Laboratory is continuing to evaluate other options for specimen collection supplies, and we will update this guidance accordingly as this information becomes available. At this time, alternatives such Amies-based transport media and saline are **NOT** acceptable until the use of this media can be validated and acceptable by all appropriate regulatory authorities. Specimen collection requirements are a critical factor to ensure our Laboratory is reporting accurate and reliable results.

UNCHANGED: Specimen Collection

- Nasopharynx (NP) swabs are acceptable. Only 1 swab is required.
- Specimens must be labeled two identifiers. You may use PUI#, medical record # and the patient name. Date of birth is not acceptable as a second identifier.
- Electronically complete a LAB requisition form (LAB96) to accompany the sample.
- For prioritization, please indicate patient acuity in the top left corner of the Lab requisition form (Ex: ICU, inpatient, discharged from ED, healthcare worker working with vulnerable patients, etc.)

UNCHANGED: Specimen Transport

- Transport specimens at 2-8°C and ship for receipt within 72 hours of collection. Transport specimen to laboratory as soon as possible after collection. *Any specimens received outside of required temperatures will be rejected.* Adequate amounts of coolant (e.g. ice packs, gel packs, etc.) need to be added during transport of the specimen to ensure arrival at 2-8°C.
- Alternately, if shipping is delayed, specimens should be frozen at -70°C or lower and shipped overnight on dry ice.

UNCHANGED: Released Patient Reports

Results can be expected within 48-72 hours **upon specimen receipt at the OPH Laboratory**. Please allow ample time for analysis hours before contacting the laboratory to track a sample's progress. Providers will be contacted with patient positive results using the contact information provided on the Submitter Fax Form (above). Lab cannot give patient results.

UNCHANGED: Communications

- For specimen related transport and analysis inquiries except results
- Provider Help Phone Line: 225-219-5265 (M-F 8am-4:30pm)
- or email COVIDLAB@LA.GOV (7a-Midnight daily)