



Department of Health and Human Services  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
286 Water Street  
11 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel: (207) 287-8016; Fax (207) 287-9058  
TTY Users: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

## Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

# PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

**To:** All Health Care  
**From:** Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist  
**Subject:** **Universal Testing in Congregate Living Settings**  
**Date / Time:** Saturday, May 23, 2020 at 6:10PM  
**Pages:** 2  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Message ID:** 2020PHADV023

### UNIVERSAL TESTING IN CONGREGATE LIVING SETTINGS

Maine CDC has adopted the following recommendations regarding universal testing in congregate living settings. This policy may be updated as scientific understanding of COVID-19 evolves.

#### I. BACKGROUND

- This guidance applies **where a single, confirmed case of COVID-19 (using a SARS-CoV-2 PCR test) is detected among staff or residents of a congregate living setting**. Such settings include, though are not limited to, long-term care facilities, shelters for people experiencing homelessness, correctional facilities, group homes, and assisted living facilities.
- Universal testing in this context refers to testing done by unit or building, not at a facility level, unless staff are shared or rotate among various units or buildings.
- This policy is a recommendation; facilities may opt to pursue universal testing before a single case is confirmed.
- For mass testing at this time, Maine CDC's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) will only test samples collected pursuant to this policy (*i.e.*, when there has been at least one confirmed COVID-19 case).

#### II. UNIVERSAL TESTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- When a congregate living setting as described above has a single case of confirmed COVID-19 among staff or residents, Maine CDC recommends universal testing for all other staff and residents in the unit or building, except as noted above.
- Facilities should conduct the sample collection using their own staff or outside staff, and must coordinate with a health care provider to order the tests and obtain all necessary and appropriate consent.
- HETL will test specimens collected by a facility pursuant to this policy. If a facility opts to send specimens to HETL for testing pursuant to this policy, the facility must:

- Arrange for appropriate transport of the specimens to HETL; and
- Notify Maine CDC epidemiology staff that samples are being sent to HETL prior to transport.
- Facilities should email [Coronavirus@maine.gov](mailto:Coronavirus@maine.gov) or call the case investigator and include the number of specimens being sent and the approximate arrival time.
- Facilities must first establish an account with HETL prior to sending any specimens.
- Maine CDC may be able to furnish PPE and/or swabs and viral transport media, as Maine CDC supplies allow.
- Tests done using supplies furnished by Maine CDC must be sent to HETL for testing.
- Facilities may choose to use other laboratories to accomplish universal testing. Those laboratories may have preferred swabs and test kits, so please check with that laboratory before initiating sample collection.

### III. RE-TESTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- For facilities in which universal testing has been recommended:
  1. Maine CDC recommends re-testing of COVID-negative staff in facilities 7 days after the initial specimen collection.
  2. If re-testing yields further COVID-positive staff, Maine CDC recommends re-testing of COVID-negative staff every 7 days until there are 2 successive weeks of only negative tests, or when all staff have tested positive. Additional re-testing beyond these guidelines will not be performed at HETL.
- Maine CDC may recommend re-testing residents in the following circumstances:
  1. There is a newly identified positive staff who worked in a unit where there are no COVID-positive residents.
  2. There is a newly identified, symptomatic, COVID-positive resident in a unit where there are no other known COVID-positive residents.
  3. There are a significant number of new COVID-positive staff.

### IV. CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITIES

- Staff who are COVID-positive will not be allowed to work for a minimum of 10 days.
  - Thus, facilities must ensure that they have a staffing plan in place prior to pursuing universal testing in accordance with this policy.
  - Certain facilities, such as long-term care facilities, are required to have such plans in place.
- Facilities will need to furnish a medical order for testing. This will not be supplied by Maine CDC.
- Facilities must ensure that testing is on an opt-in basis and that residents and staff may decline.
- Resident who decline testing should be considered close contacts and placed into quarantine for 14 days.
- Staff who decline testing should be referred to internal HR policies.
- Testing may be traumatic for certain patients. Mid-turbinate swabs are an acceptable alternative to nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs, especially for clients for whom sedation is required or who are medically frail.