

# Universal Testing in Long-Term Care Settings

Ericka L. Kalp PhD, MPH, CIC, FAPIC

BUREAU OF EPIDEMIOLOGY



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



- Presentation will discuss:

- ▣ Universal Testing

- ▣ Overview

- ▣ Helpful hints

- ▣ Scenarios

# Mandatory Universal Testing

- June 9, 2020 Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Directing Testing at Skilled Nursing Facilities



To protect residents and staff of skilled nursing facilities and the general public from the spread of COVID-19.

# Section 1

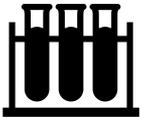
## **Universal Testing for COVID-19 at Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF)**

- A. Each SNF in the Commonwealth shall test residents and staff for COVID-19 in accordance with the Department's Facility Testing Requirements
  
- B. SNFs required to test under the Order must test all residents and staff at least once by July 24, 2020

# Testing Guidance

- Universal testing includes:

- Any resident or staff person who has never been tested
- Resident or staff person who was tested prior to May 24, 2020 and whose result was negative.
  - There will be no waivers or exceptions to the May 24<sup>th</sup> date.



- Note: If a facility tested all residents and staff on May 22<sup>nd</sup> retesting is required, since the testing date was before May 24<sup>th</sup> .
- Facilities should not test residents or staff with a history of a positive test for SARS-CoV-2.

# Section 2

## Testing Collection and Diagnostic Testing

- Specimens collected in accordance with this Order must be submitted to a laboratory approved by the State Public Health Laboratory to perform diagnostic COVID-19 testing, or to the State Public Health Laboratory with the prior approval of the Department.

# Section 3: SNF Reporting

- A. SNF shall report COVID-19 test results by individual, along with any metric required in the Facility Testing Requirements in a manner and through a system designated by the Department.
- B. Each SNF shall notify the Department of completion of its initial test of all residents and staff within 48 hours of the SNF's receipt of the test results.
  - An SNF that conducted universal testing prior to this Order shall report the results to the Department in accordance with within 72 hours of the Department's issuance of this Order.
- C. Each SNF shall immediately notify the Department of any assistance needed to comply with the Facility Testing Requirements in a manner and through a system designated by the Department.

## Section 4: Right of Individual to Refuse Testing

- Residents and Staff have right to refuse:
  - ▀ Any resident or member of the staff who does not consent to testing shall be treated in accordance with the Facility Testing Requirements.

# Section 5: Effective Date

- This Order became effective at 12:01 a.m. on June 9, 2020.



# Determining the number of testing supplies needed

- Step 1
  - ▾ Calculate total # of Residents & Staff = 500
- Step 2
  - ▾ Subtract # of + tests (25) = 475
- Step 3
  - ▾ Subtract # tested & negative since 5/24/20 (30) = 445

**Your facility will need supplies to test 445**

# Testing Best Practice

- Testing persons with previous negative tests:
  - ▼ Per the order, those who have been tested since May 24, 2020 do not need to be re-tested

...but...

- ▼ **Best practice** is to re-test anyone who has been previously untested or tested negative
  - ▼ Universal testing is a tool to inform infection prevention and control measures
  - ▼ The most helpful tool you can have is up-to-date results from everyone all at once

# Specimen Collection- Helpful Hints

- Follow all specimen collection instructions
- Rub the swab tip across the mucosal surface several times.
  - This will loosen and collect cellular material
  - BOL also recommends to allow a time of contact of up to 30 seconds (verify with your lab)
- Close the cap!
  - Break off the swab stick so that it is short enough to allow the vial top to be screwed on tightly. This prevents leakage during transport.
- Storage ⌚
  - Specimens may be refrigerated for up to 72 hours after collection – remember this includes hold time at facility and at the lab. Clearly identify collection time and transport promptly to lab.
- Keep it cold!
  - Specimens must be kept cold until they reach the laboratory – so package in **refrigerated packs** or **coolers**.



# Helpful Hints...Continued



- **Avoid Loose Ice-**

- ▣ Do not put loose ice in with specimens or into coolers with loose ice;
- ▣ If using ice must be in leak proof bags and specimen bags cannot have any type of holes;
- ▣ Specimens cannot mix with melting ice/water – consider using freezer packs.

- **Handle coolers with care**



# ▶ Bureau of Laboratories- Testing

- If the Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) conducted your testing
  - ▣ Average turn around time from receipt of samples is 2 days
  - ▣ You will receive your results securely by spreadsheet
  - ▣ Final lab reports by fax
  - ▣ Result and/or Cohorting questions
    - ▣ Contact your regional Epi staff or local health department

# Scenario #1

💡 Barb is a housekeeper on Unit A. Since she doesn't provide direct resident care, she does not need to be tested for COVID-19.

True or False



# “All Staff” = Everyone

- **All Staff require testing- regardless of role**
- DON, ADON, administrative assistants, ancillary staff etc.
- Everyone who works in the building.
- The Department is evaluating options to expand to other provider types in the future.

# Scenario #2



My facility has 300 residents and 400 staff. We use a commercial lab, but the lab informed us that they do not have the capacity to test such a large volume of specimens. What should we do?



## Options include:

- Your facility should attempt to secure lab services from another commercial/private lab or your local hospital lab.
- If after a good faith effort to contract with another lab and unable to find a lab, complete the needs assessment form (online) and request BOL to do initial testing.



- Any follow-up testing will need to be done through your commercial/private lab
  - repeat testing per guidelines
  - staff who were on vacation or medical leave and return after BOL testing completed

# Request for Testing Support

- Support is limited but may include:
  - ▣ Testing supplies
  - ▣ PPE specifically used for testing
  - ▣ Laboratory support
  - ▣ Testing support
- Email [ra-dhCOVIDtesting@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhCOVIDtesting@pa.gov) and complete the form in the auto reply

# Scenario #3

- Betty in room 112 tested positive for COVID-19. She has no symptoms of being sick. The test must be a false-positive, right?

**WRONG!**

- ▣ Any positive PCR test must be considered positive.
- ▣ Betty needs to be moved to the **Red** Zone
- ▣ The remainder of Betty's unit is considered exposed and is now a **Yellow** Zone.
  - ▣ Staff should implement the use of full PPE

# Scenario #4



**Mr. Johnson in room 485 tested positive for COVID- 19 on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Should he be tested again in two weeks to see if he is cured?**

**Answer: No**

Residents who were confirmed positive do not need to be tested again unless the facility's policy requires the test-based strategy for discontinuing transmission-based precautions (PA-HAN-502).

- Prolonged positive results have been reported.
- Residents who continue to test positive can have transmission-based precautions discontinued using the via symptom-based strategy (if symptomatic) or time-based strategy (if asymptomatic).

# Scenario #5

We collected a specimen from Mr. Jones in Room 334. The lab called and said the specimen was rejected because it leaked during transport.

- Are we required to retest that resident?

Answer: Yes- recollection should be attempted

- What if Mr. Jones refuses a second collection?
  - ▣ Residents have the right to refuse testing

# Specimen Collection

- Avoid collection and transport errors that may result in rejected specimens.



# Scenario #6

My facility was contacted by a home-based lab that advertises that they will do our testing for free (so they can try out their testing platform). My facility thinks this is a great idea!

- Facilities must verify that the laboratory completing testing meets the testing requirements.
  - Have a current Pennsylvania laboratory permit
  - Be CLIA certified
  - Be approved to perform COVID-19 testing, using an FDA approved viral test
  - Commit to reporting all results, as mandated, into PA-NEDSS via electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) or manual entry

Email [RA-DHPACLIA@pa.gov](mailto:RA-DHPACLIA@pa.gov) to verify lab licensure and approval in PA  
List of approved labs is updated weekly on DOH Website:

- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/COVID-19%20Labs.pdf>

# Scenario #7



We are going to be testing hundreds of staff and hundreds of residents. Do you have any tips for how to do this safely and efficiently?

## Tips for Staff Testing

- Set up outside tent or testing area
- Have a clear check-in procedure
- Social distancing considerations
- Consider safety of waiting staff
- Plan to clean and disinfect surfaces between collections
- Test over shift change for example:
  - Night shift tested at 5am-8am
  - Day shift testing 11am-1pm
  - Evening and day shift testing 2pm-5pm
- Staff may continue to work while awaiting results (only if asymptomatic).



# Scenario #7



We are going to be testing hundreds of staff and hundreds of residents. Do you have any tips for how to do this safely and efficiently?

## Tips for Resident Testing

- 3 person team
  - 1 person collects specimen
  - 1 person to assist as needed in the collection process
  - 1 person to perform administrative functions, such as labeling tubes.
- Test early in the morning while residents are still in bed
- Test in the resident's room with the door closed
- Outline plan to move from lowest risk to higher risk areas of the facility
- Plan PPE changes and have supplies available for unexpected changes due to cough, sneeze or other suspected contamination



# Tips for Using Bulk Swabs

Best practices to use bulk swabs include:

- Step 1:
  - Staff retrieving the swab from the bulk storage performs hand hygiene
- Step 2:
  - Staff dons a new pair of gloves, being careful not to contaminate the gloves in the process
- Step 3:
  - Staff immediately pulls the test swab from the bulk container prior to touching anything else.
    - This minimizes the risk of potential contamination of the swab prior to collection of the sample.

# Considerations

- More testing tips and recommendations at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/nursing-homes-facility-wide-testing.html>

# Questions

- Questions about Testing Support/Supplies:  
[ra-dhCOVIDtesting@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhCOVIDtesting@pa.gov)
- Questions about Universal Testing Planning:  
[RA-DHSNFQUESTION@pa.gov](mailto:RA-DHSNFQUESTION@pa.gov)