NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Department of Health

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DATE: April 26, 2020
TO: Health Care Providers, Health Care Facilities, and Local Health Departments
FROM: New York State Department of Health

Updated Interim Guidance: Protocol for COVID-19 Testing Applicable to All Health Care Providers and Local Health Departments

Background:
Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) continues to monitor the situation and work to expand COVID-19 diagnostic and serologic testing for New Yorkers.

Purpose:
Appropriate and efficient standards for testing are an essential component of a multi-layered strategy to prevent sustained spread of COVID-19 in New York State and to ensure resources are being efficiently and equitably distributed. New York State continues to increase testing capacity for COVID-19 on a daily basis. However, until such time as we are at full capacity, this guidance is necessary to ensure that New York State prioritizes resources to meet the most urgent public health need.

Diagnostic and/or serologic testing for COVID-19 shall be authorized by a health care provider when:

- An individual is symptomatic or has a history of symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, and/or trouble breathing), particularly if the individual is 70 years of age or older, the individual has a compromised immune system, or the individual has an underlying health condition); or
- An individual has had close (i.e. within six feet) or proximate contact with a person known to be positive with COVID-19; or
- An individual is subject to a precautionary or mandatory quarantine; or
- An individual is employed as a health care worker, first responder, or other essential worker who directly interacts with the public while working; or
- An individual presents with a case where the facts and circumstances – as determined by the treating clinician in consultation with state or local department of health officials – warrant testing.

Based on individual clinical factors, health care providers should use clinical judgement to determine the appropriate COVID-19 test(s) (i.e. diagnostic or serologic) that should be obtained.

Testing Prioritization:
On April 17, 2020, Executive Order 202.19 was issued requiring the establishment of a single, statewide coordinated testing prioritization process that shall require all laboratories in the state, both public and private, that conduct COVID-19 diagnostic testing, to complete such COVID-19 diagnostic testing only in accordance with such process.

To support the statewide coordinated testing prioritization, health care providers should take the following prioritization into consideration when ordering a COVID-19 test:

1. Symptomatic individuals, particularly if the individual is part of a high-risk population, including persons who are hospitalized; persons residing in nursing homes, long-term care facilities, or other congregate care settings; persons who have a compromised immune system; persons who have an underlying health condition; and persons who are 70 years of age or older.

2. Individuals who have had close (i.e. within six feet) or proximate contact with a person known to be positive with COVID-19.

3. Individuals who are employed as health care workers, first responders, or in any position within a nursing home, long-term care facility, or other congregate care setting, including but not limited to:

    - Correction/Parole/Probation Officers
    - Direct Care Providers
    - Firefighters
    - Health Care Practitioners, Professionals, Aides, and Support Staff (e.g. Physicians, Nurses, Public Health Personnel)
    - Medical Specialists
    - Nutritionists and Dietitians
    - Occupational/Physical/Recreational/Speech Therapists
    - Paramedics/Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)
    - Police Officers
    - Psychologists/Psychiatrists
    - Residential Care Program Managers

4. Individuals who are employed as essential employees who directly interact with the public while working, including but not limited to:

    - Animal Care Workers (e.g. Veterinarians)
    - Automotive Service and Repair Workers
    - Bank Tellers and Workers
    - Building Code Enforcement Officers
    - Child Care Workers
    - Client-Facing Case Managers and Coordinators
    - Counselors (e.g. Mental Health, Addiction, Youth, Vocational, Crisis, etc.)
    - Delivery Workers
    - Dentists and Dental Hygienists
    - Essential Construction Workers at Occupied Residences or Buildings
    - Faith-Based Leaders (e.g. Chaplains, Clergy Members)
    - Field Investigators/Regulators for Health and Safety
    - Food Service Workers
    - Funeral Home Workers
    - Hotel/Motel Workers
    - Human Services Providers
    - Laundry and Dry Cleaning Workers

- Mail and Shipping Workers
- Maintenance and Janitorial/Cleaning Workers
- Optometrists, Opticians, and Supporting Staff
- Retail Workers at Essential Businesses (e.g. Grocery Stores, Pharmacies, Convenience Stores, Gas Stations, Hardware Stores)
- Security Guards and Personnel
- Shelter Workers and Homelessness Support Staff
- Social Workers
- Teachers/Professors/Educators
- Transit Workers (e.g. Airports, Railways, Buses, and For-Hire Vehicles)
- Trash and Recycling Workers
- Utility Workers

Diagnostic Testing Access:
Individuals who fit these prioritization categories and do not currently have access to testing can call the New York State COVID-19 Hotline at 1-888-364-3065 or visit the NYSDOH website https://covid19screening.health.ny.gov/ to be screened for eligibility, and if eligible, have an appointment set up at one of the State's Testing Sites.

Precautions:
Any release of information must adhere strictly to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and any other applicable federal and state laws governing personal health information. Providers who have questions can contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 during business hours or 1-866-881-2809 during evenings, weekends, and holidays.

Additional Resources:

- NYS DOH COVID-19 Website
- NYS Local Health Department Directory
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 Website
- World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 Website