



**Indiana**  
Department  
of  
**Health**

## **Long-term Care** **NEWSLETTER**

**LTC Newsletter 2021-05**  
**January 27, 2021**

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### **LTC Information:**

- **National Guard Soldier Mission End Date**
- **National Healthcare Safety Network – Important Request**
- **TB testing and COVID-19 Vaccine – CDC Information**

### **National Guard Soldier Mission End Date**

Indiana deployed in November 2020 more than 1,500 national guard soldiers to skilled nursing facilities across the state. The guard provided essential support at time when community positivity and facility outbreaks were increasing. These soldiers answered the call and served with honor by helping with data entry, visitor and staff screening, disinfecting high touch areas, helping with food delivery, visiting with residents, and providing support during the vaccine rollout.

These soldiers put the lives of those who work and reside in our nursing homes ahead of their own as they left their jobs, homes and families to help in the state's COVID-19 response. We have received countless notes of appreciation and heard numerous stories of how much this support has meant to all of you. The work of these soldiers has boosted morale, helped free up staff to provide clinical care, and has no doubt saved lives. I know all of you join us, in the state Department of Health, in thanking all the brave women and men of the Indiana National Guard who supported this mission.

We are now planning for the end of this mission to allow many of these soldiers to return to their previous jobs or begin other missions. The guard will be leaving facilities approximately seven days after the facility's second vaccine clinic date. Most will be available during the clinic to help with logistics, but some guard members may leave a

few days before or a few days after this date. For example, if your second CVS or Walgreens vaccine clinic is scheduled for Feb. 4, the soldiers in your facility would leave on Feb. 11 (plus or minus a few days) The earliest date this will begin is Jan. 31. Please extend your appreciation to the men and women of the national guard as this mission comes to a close.

[IN National Guard Mission End Dates/Facility](#)

## **National Healthcare Safety Network – Important Request**

Please log into the [National Healthcare Safety Network \(NHSN\)](#) COVID-19 module and check your facility data for errors and missing information around the dates of Nov. 16, 2020, and Dec. 25, 2020. If this information is missing, please update this as soon as possible.

Quick reminders for your NHSN COVID-19 reporting:

- Your COVID-19 data should be reported into the NHSN every 7 days (ideally around the **same** time of day and day of the week).
- Make sure the number of facility and occupied beds are entered each week.
- Double check that the number of weekly COVID-19 positive residents is not greater than the number of facility beds or occupied beds.
- Residents who are COVID positive upon admission should be reported as a new admission.
- If your facility has zero resident or staff COVID cases or deaths, you must enter a 0 in those fields instead of leaving it blank.
- Answer all questions, including shortages in PPE, testing supplies and staff.
- If you are unable report your weekly COVID-19 data due to not having NHSN access, please email Melissa Meador as soon as possible [mmeador1@isdh.in.gov](mailto:mmeador1@isdh.in.gov).

If you have any questions or issues reporting, please contact Melissa Meador phone: 317-439-8772 or email [mmeador1@isdh.in.gov](mailto:mmeador1@isdh.in.gov).

## **TB testing and COVID-19 Vaccine – CDC Information**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released a [letter](#) with recommendations around the timing of tuberculosis (TB) testing and administration of COVID-19 vaccines. We want to provide some clarifications to avoid any confusion:

- There is **no** evidence that either of the currently available COVID-19 vaccines affect the results of a tuberculin skin test (TST) or the TB blood test - the interferon gamma release assay (IGRA).
- There is **no** evidence, or reason to suspect, that the TST or IGRA tests would interfere with the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines.

So, what is the CDC saying and why?

We know that some live virus vaccines, such as the measles mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, can temporarily decrease the body's immune response. The TST test works by injecting a small amount of TB proteins under a person's skin. If the person had been previously exposed to TB, their immune system responds causing that area of the skin to swell up within 2-3 days. Therefore, a vaccine (like the MMR) that can decrease a person's immune response could cause false negative TST test. So now, a person previously exposed to TB who gets a TST test may not show a positive test.

The COVID vaccines are not live virus vaccines and are not known to suppress the immune system. Therefore, there is no reason at this time to suspect that they could cause a false negative TST or IGRA test. However, because these are new types of vaccines (mRNA) the CDC is recommending, *out of an abundance of caution*, the following for staff or residents who require TB testing:

- If using a TST test, time it so that the test will be placed and read prior to the date the person receives the COVID-19 vaccine.
- If using a IGRA blood test, time it so the blood is drawn prior to the date the person receives the COVID-19 vaccine.

If someone has already received their first or second vaccine dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, the CDC would recommend deferring the TST or IGRA test until four weeks after the second vaccine dose.

Since the health risks of COVID-19 are known and significant for those living in nursing homes, no resident's COVID-19 vaccine should be denied or delayed secondary to a TB test.

By way of reminder, the state Department of Health has waived or modified the following regarding tuberculosis testing:

Comprehensive Care:

- 410 IAC 16.2-3.1-14(t)(1) - Waives pre-employment tuberculosis testing for personnel and gives the facility ninety (90) days after the start of employment to complete this testing.
- 410 IAC 16.2-3.1-18(e) – Waives and modifies the requirement for TB testing for residents and allows the TB test to be completed within 90 days after admission.

Residential Care:

- 410 IAC 16.2.-5-1.4(f)(1) – Waives pre-employment tuberculosis testing for personnel and gives the facility ninety (90)
- 410 IAC 16.2-5-12(e) – Waives and modifies the requirement for TB testing for residents and allows the TB test to be completed within 90 days after the resident’s admission.

If you have questions around the CDC recommendations described above, please contact [bburoker@isdh.in.gov](mailto:bburoker@isdh.in.gov) or call 317-234-7340.