



Indiana
Department
of
Health

Long-term Care **NEWSLETTER**

LTC Newsletter 2021-34

July 15, 2021

LTC Update:

- **Enhanced surveillance for COVID virus variants**

Enhanced surveillance for COVID virus variants

Long-term care (LTC) residents have higher risk of severe illness and complications from COVID-19 than the general population. Since LTC facilities are congregate settings, places where people live together, the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread rapidly. Early detection of a change in the genetic makeup of the virus (a variant) can help us better prepare to take quick action to prevent spread and protect residents and staff.

The Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are conducting enhanced surveillance for COVID virus variants to advise on treatment and vaccine impact and to help predict national surges. The enhanced surveillance involves testing and sequencing of the nasopharyngeal samples as explained below.

Start date: July 19, 2021

The process begins when three or more cases are found within 14 days at a LTC facility (staff or resident or combination). There is no change in guidance regarding outbreak testing, isolation, visitation, excursion or other process when there is an outbreak defined as one or more staff or resident case.

- IDOH will contact you and supply testing supplies via Langham Logistics.
- Nasopharyngeal (NP) samples should be collected from all residents and staff from the affected unit(s) and sent to IDOH lab via Langham. It is best to collect samples within five to

seven days of the initial positive test or symptom onset. If 14 days or more have elapsed since the resident or staff member initially tested positive, do not collect an NP sample.

- Samples can be collected on weekends but must be refrigerated at 2–8 degrees C (35–46 F) until picked up by Langham.
- IDOH will send a spreadsheet for the facility to provide information about individual from the affected unit(s).
- IDOH will provide PCR test results to the facility. Lab will perform sequencing on all suitable samples. IDOH will inform the local health department any time a variant of concern is identified.
- The facility administration should contact IDOH at StrikeTeamRequest@isdh.IN.gov to request sequencing results.

Follow the IDOH guidance that is in line with the CDC recommendations for transmission based contact-droplet precautions, cohorting and outbreak testing for contact exposures. These are the same regardless of the variant.

Please email clinical questions to Shireesha Vuppalanchi, MD, IDOH medical director for long-term care, at svuppalanchi@isdh.in.gov. Please send all other questions to StrikeTeamRequest@isdh.IN.gov.