

ISDH Long Term Care Newsletter
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Today's Issue:

- **IMPORTANT** - Mandatory COVID-19 Testing of All Nursing Home Staff

The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) has started the first phase of mandatory COVID-19 testing for all of the state's nursing home (SNF/NF) workers. ISDH has invested considerable resources to deploy a statewide testing operation for this effort, planned with input from the long-term care industry. This crucial testing will yield important information for our fight against COVID-19, both facility-specific and more community-oriented, including:

- How many nursing home staff test positive for COVID-19
- What jobs the COVID-19-positive workers are in
- Whether staff positives correlate with known resident positives
- Whether staff positives correlate with community prevalence

The first phase will also help frame the important follow-up testing by helping us identify where repeat testing is needed, whether it should be focused or widespread, how often it should be repeated, what barriers exist to testing, and what we must do to overcome those barriers.

Strong engagement and cooperation by **every** facility is **critical** to the success of this important and mandatory testing. This includes a number of specific items that each facility is expected to secure and follow to ensure testing success, including the items below.

Facilities must make a concerted, good faith effort to secure testing for all workers.

The ISDH testing initiative is **mandatory** for all nursing home employees and other workers (including contractors and volunteers). Each facility must make a concerted good faith effort to secure testing for all its workers. As part of these efforts, facilities must not encourage or facilitate worker refusals to be tested (e.g., through the creation or collection of a form with listed reasons for "refusal"). If staff refuses testing the facility should collect the reason why using open ended questioning. Workers should also be

informed that refusals to be tested will be reported to ISDH.

Facilities must enter accurate data for each individual employee in the registration site.

Please be sure to enter accurate data for each individual employee when registering them for testing. Some facilities have entered the same date of birth or identical symptoms for all their workers, which harms the integrity of the testing and its results. This data is critical for the lab analysis and for contact tracing if an employee tests positive. Inaccurate data may lead to the sample being rejected at the lab and require the employee to be retested.

Employees must correctly identify the facilities where they work.

Please be sure that each employee answers yes to the registration question, “Do you or your minor/dependent work or live in a group setting?” If the answer is “Yes,” the employee must respond to a second question, “Do you work in a long-term care facility?” The employee will then identify the specific site where the employee works. Answering these questions correctly is the only way the employee will be associated with the facility. If the employee does not fill this out correctly, they will not be associated with the facility, a lab requisition will not be printed, and the employee’s test cannot be processed.

Employees must be registered before sample collection kits are dropped off.

Please be sure that all workers who need to be tested are registered in the Optum system prior to sample kit drop off. If an employee is not registered when the sample kits are dropped off, the testing team cannot check the employee in, print a test requisition, or leave a sample collection kit for that employee. Sample collection kits cannot be left for employees who are not registered in the Optum system when the kits are dropped off at the facility.

To register for testing, the worker must complete the process at www.lhi.care. Workers who lack internet access or have problems registering at the website can call (888) 634-1116 to register by phone. Facilities may complete registration for their workers, but are responsible for obtaining and entering each worker’s accurate and complete information.

Test specimens must be properly stored, and coolers must be properly returned to ISDH.

All specimens should be stored in a cooler after specimen collection is completed. Coolers will be provided when sample kits are dropped off. All samples must be stored on ice, but the samples should not be placed directly on the ice. Please place a piece of cardboard or bubble wrap over the ice to serve as a barrier.

Optum will be collecting all samples the day after the kits were dropped off. The cooler should be left at the facility so that an ISDH employee can pick up the cooler and repurpose the cooler for another site. The Optum courier should **not** take the cooler when they collect the samples.

Drop-off appointments cannot be changed, and Optum test sites require registration.

At this time, appointments for drop offs of sample collection kits cannot be rescheduled. If a schedule time does not work for your facility, please utilize a nearby Optum testing

site. Optum testing sites do not require physician orders for testing, but workers will need to register (following the same instructions as above to ensure they are associated with the facility) and schedule appointments in advance.

Additional information on Indiana's mandatory testing for nursing home workers is available in [Long Term Care Newsletter 2020-41](#).

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this important step to protecting those in your care and in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.