



## Department of Health

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**DATE:** May 31, 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 (NYS DOH) continues to monitor the situation and work to expand COVID-19 diagnostic and serologic testing for New Yorkers. This updates the guidance issued on April 26, 2020.

**Purpose:** Appropriate and efficient standards for diagnostic and serological 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 has undertaken tremendous steps to increase testing capacity for COVID-19 on a daily basis. However, this guidance remains necessary to ensure that New York State prioritizes resources to meet the evolving public health needs as we respond to, and recover from, this unprecedented public health emergency.

**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 is less than 21 years of age who has symptoms consistent with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), which is also known as Pediatric Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome; or
- An individual requires a test for medical care, including being tested prior to an elective surgery or procedure, or individuals who are pregnant and their designated support person; 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, employee of a nursing home, long-term care facility, or other congregate care facility, or other essential employee who directly interacts with the public while working; or
- An individual is employed by an essential business (e.g. food production, medical supply manufacturing) or any business that has been designated to “reopen” in certain regions of the state (e.g. construction, curbside/in-store pickup retail, wholesale trade); 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, or other criteria set forth by NYS DOH (e.g. place of residence, occupation).

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 for an individual.

**Testing Prioritization:**

On April 17, 2020, [Executive Order 202.19](#), as extended by Executive Order 202.29, 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 less than 21 years of age who have symptoms consistent with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), which is also known as Pediatric Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome.
3. Individuals requiring a COVID-19 test for medical care, including being tested prior to an elective surgery or procedure, or individuals who are pregnant and their designated support person.
4. Individuals who have had close (i.e. within six feet) or proximate contact with a person known to be positive with COVID-19.
5. Individuals who are subject to a precautionary or mandatory quarantine.
6. 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
  - Counselors (e.g. Mental Health, Addiction, Youth, Vocational, Crisis, etc.)
  - Direct Care Providers
  - Dentists and Dental Hygienists
  - Firefighters
  - Health Care Practitioners, Professionals, Aides, and Support Staff (e.g. Physicians, Nurses, Public Health Personnel)
  - Medical Specialists
  - National Guard and Military Service Members Aiding in COVID-19 Response
  - Nutritionists and Dietitians
  - Occupational/Physical/Recreational/Speech Therapists

- Optometrists, Opticians, and Supporting Staff
  - Paramedics/Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)
  - Police Officers
  - Psychologists/Psychiatrists
  - Residential Care Program Managers
7. 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
  - Court Personnel
  - Delivery Workers
  - 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, Cemetery, and Crematory Workers
  - Hotel/Motel Workers
  - Human Services Providers
  - Laundry and Dry Cleaning Workers
  - Mail and Shipping Workers
  - Maintenance and Janitorial/Cleaning Workers
  - 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
8. Individuals who are employed by an essential business (e.g. food production, medical supply manufacturing) or any business that has been designated to “reopen” in certain regions of the state (e.g. construction, curbside/in-store pickup retail, wholesale trade).
9. Individuals who present 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, or other criteria set forth by NYS DOH (e.g. place of residence, occupation).

**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 NYS DOH 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.

**Serologic Testing Access:**

Individuals seeking serologic (antibody) testing should speak with their health care provider.

**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 NYS DOH 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](#)