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Governor



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Date: June 30, 2021

To: Nursing Facilities

Re: Revised Testing Options for Nursing Facility Staff Testing

### Applicability and Effective Date

This guidance applies to all Nursing Facilities and takes effect on July 1, 2021.

### Purpose

This memorandum expands Nursing Facility testing options, permitting facilities to submit surveillance testing samples of unvaccinated staff to the State of Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL). In the guidance issued on May 5, 2021, the Department adopted the same frequency standard as CMS for routine surveillance testing. It also adopted other changes announced by CMS on 4/27/21, including guidance that fully vaccinated staff no longer need to be tested as part of surveillance testing for COVID-19.

### Surveillance Testing

Per the May 5, 2021, guidance, all nursing facilities, all ICF/IIDs and a subset of adult Assisted Housing providers are subject to surveillance testing of staff. The adult Assisted Housing settings that are subject to surveillance testing has not changed from the October 9, 2020, guidance. Table 1 lists the types of facilities that are subject to staff surveillance testing (Group A).

**Table 1. Settings Subject to Surveillance Testing**

<b>Group A: Staff Surveillance Testing Required</b>	<b>Group B: Surveillance Testing Not Required</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nursing Facilities</li><li>• ICF/IIDs</li><li>• Facilities designated as Alzheimer's/Dementia Care</li><li>• PNMI/Residential Care Facilities/Assisted Living Facilities that are part of Multi-Level Complexes with Nursing Facilities</li><li>• PNMI Appendix C Facilities (for Adults with High Functional/Medical Needs)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adult PNMI, Residential Care Facilities, and Assisted Living Facilities not included in Group A</li><li>• Adult Family Care Homes</li><li>• Adult Group Homes</li></ul>

All facilities in Group A were required to complete baseline testing in October 2020. Ongoing surveillance testing frequency must be at least as often as indicated in Table 2. For more detail on testing frequency, please refer to CMS guidance [QSO-20-38-NH \(revised 4/27/21\)](#).

**Table 2. Surveillance Testing Frequency (Applies to Group A in Table 1)**

<b>Community COVID-19 Activity</b>	<b>County Positivity Rate in the past 14 days, measured weekly by ME CDC</b>	<b>Minimum Testing Frequency of Unvaccinated Staff</b>
<b>Low</b>	<b>&lt;5%</b>	<b>Once a month</b>
<b>Medium</b>	<b>5% - 10%</b>	<b>Once a week</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>&gt;10%</b>	<b>Twice a week</b>

The 14-day positivity rate is updated weekly and posted to the Maine CDC website:

Go to: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/data.shtml>

Scroll to the bottom of the page, where you will see a list of additional data tables.

Choose “View Tables of Data for the Previous 14 and 28 Days”

Click on “Download Data for the Previous 14 and 28 Days (PDF)”

Use the 14-day table to locate your county’s “% positive.”

### **Revised Nursing Facility Testing Options**

1. Effective July 1, 2021, a nursing facility may submit COVID-19 surveillance testing samples to the State’s Health and Environmental Testing Lab (HETL) in Augusta.
  - a. Facilities are required to procure swabs and viral transport media or request supplies through their Public Health District Liaison (PHDL) (Appendix A).
  - b. Facilities must provide temperature-controlled transport of samples to HETL. Costs associated with transport are incurred by the facility; however, facilities can coordinate to share same-day shipping costs or work with a local health care organization that already has a courier service to Augusta.
  - c. Facilities must enroll in the Electronic Testing Order and Reporting (eTOR) portal to avoid unnecessary delays in processing of samples. Facilities that have used eTOR in the past but have not done so for some time are encouraged to call the HETL supervisor, Lori Webber, at (207) 287-1722 prior to sending samples.
  - d. Prior to submitting samples, the facility must use the approved scheduling link [HETL Surveillance Testing](#) to select a consistent time to drop samples. Presently, HETL is only accepting nursing facility surveillance samples on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each week. HETL’s hours of operation are 7am to 5pm; however, it is encouraged to drop your samples prior to 3pm for timely processing. The average turn-around-time at HETL is currently 24 hours from the time the samples are received.

2. Nursing facilities may continue to use private reference labs for PCR surveillance testing and submit for reimbursement, as outlined in the May 7, 2021 Memorandum “Updated Nursing Facility Staff Surveillance Testing and Reimbursement.” However, the Department may discontinue this reimbursement at some point in the future.
3. Antigen testing may also be used with the supply provided by the federal government, supplemented with additional kits as needed by the facility, subject to the reporting requirements included below in the information regarding BinaxNOW. Please note, the reporting requirements apply to any brand of antigen test.
  - a. If using antigen tests, two rounds must be completed for each required testing event. For example, if required to test weekly, two rounds of antigen testing (or one round of PCR) would be completed.

All Nursing Facilities should continue to use HETL for universal testing in the event of a positive case or an outbreak.

For additional information, including previously issued guidance and resources, please go to [Office of Aging and Disability Services COVID-19 Resource page](#).

Appendix A:

Public Health District Liaisons

**District 1 – York**

Adam Hartwig, MH  
York District Public Health Liaison  
Maine CDC  
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Sanford, ME 04073  
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**District 2 – Cumberland**

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Cumberland District Public Health Liaison  
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**District 3 – Western**

Jamie L. Paul  
Western District Public Health Liaison  
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**District 4 – Midcoast**

Drexell White  
Midcoast District Public Health Liaison  
Maine CDC  
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**District 5 – Central**

Paula Thomson  
Central District Public Health Liaison  
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**District 6 – Penquis**

Jessica Fogg, MPA  
Penquis District Public Health Liaison  
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**District 7 – Downeast**

Alfred May, Jr., MPH  
Downeast District Public Health Liaison  
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**District 8 – Aroostook**

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**District 9 - Tribal**

Currently Vacant—Please contact if assistance is needed:  
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