

June 30, 2020

This plan will be updated as the COVID-19 response changes.

Goals for COVID-19 Testing

- Goal 1:** Test all symptomatic patients by connecting them to primary care and referring them to hospital testing sites.
- Goal 2:** Respond to outbreaks – community or facility based – with testing resources. Ensure Vermont Department of Health capacity for response should community response not be available.
- Goal 3:** Provide testing and results interpretation for vulnerable populations.
- Goal 4:** Develop policies for testing in health care, long-term care, and congregate living settings.
- Goal 5:** Ensure community access to testing for individuals in quarantine (e.g. close contacts of cases and people returning to or entering Vermont) through primary care, FQHCs and pharmacies.

The Vermont Department of Health alone cannot meet the statewide need for COVID-19 testing – health care providers and facilities across Vermont must participate in the testing effort. While this document lays out a general framework for statewide testing, not every community will look the same, and regional strengths and differences must be considered to allow for sustainable testing for the duration of the COVID-19 response.

Testing is only one part of the response. For the purposes of this document it is understood that the Health Department will conduct all contact tracing for all known positive COVID-19 cases. The Health Department will also continue to lead on messaging to the general population about prevention, testing, and quarantine guidance.

For the purpose of this document, “testing” when used generally refers only to PCR diagnostic testing, and not antigen or serology testing.

We have confidence that together we can expand testing opportunities across Vermont.

Who should get tested?

- **Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19** should contact a primary care provider or be connected to primary care through a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). This will allow for appropriate symptom management and overall care. Primary care providers can refer patients to hospital testing locations or test them within their own facilities if personal protective equipment (PPE) and facility capacity allow.
- **People in quarantine** due to exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or people in quarantine due to travel who wish to end quarantine early with a negative test. These people should be referred to primary care or an FQHC to discuss testing options and symptom monitoring.

- **People working in health care or congregate care settings** may need to be tested at regular intervals per Health Department guidance ([health care settings](#), [long-term care facilities](#), [Department of Corrections](#), [colleges and universities](#)). Implementation of this testing (i.e. ordering, swabbing and delivering results) will be completed by different entities depending on the situation.
- **Patients scheduled for a procedure or surgery** may need to be tested prior to the procedure (see [Inpatient/Outpatient Medical Services](#) for more details). These patients should be referred by their provider to the hospital or health care setting for testing to ensure timely reporting of results.
- **Patients being referred to congregate psychiatric settings** from a hospital Emergency Department must be tested before they are transported. These tests are collected at the Emergency Department, labelled as priority specimens, and processed by the University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMCC) and the Health Department Laboratory.
- **Patients with special medical or clinical considerations** should be tested when a provider determines it is warranted.

Who should *not* be tested?

- **People returning to work** with no symptoms, who have not been exposed to someone with COVID-19, and who have not travelled to counties in other states requiring quarantine based on [travel guidance from the Agency for Commerce and Community Development](#) at that time.
- **People who tested positive previously and had symptoms of COVID-19** do not need to be retested except in special cases. These people should isolate until they are symptom free for 72 hours and it has been at least 10 days since symptom onset.
- **People who tested positive previously and did *not* have symptoms of COVID-19** do not need to be retested except in special cases. These people should isolate for 10 days since the date of their positive test. If they develop symptoms during that time, they isolate until they are symptom free for 72 hours and it has been at least 10 days since symptom onset.

Who collects the sample?

The Health Department will continue to schedule pop-up testing sites in the near future to meet the ongoing need but seeks assistance from partners to provide sustained routine testing across the state. As more permanent sites become available, this will enable the Health Department to reserve resources for testing in the event of community or facility outbreaks. The Health Department has a [map](#) of all non-Health Department-run COVID-19 testing sites in the state on its website.

Health Department Testing (Commissioner Levine is the ordering provider):

- Community outbreak response
- Facility outbreak response
- Department of Corrections ongoing testing

- Weekly District Office testing (this space should be reserved for those who cannot access testing through other providers)
- As needed for vulnerable populations

Hospital Testing (ordering provider is either primary care or hospital provider):

- Preventive testing of their own staff
- Pre-procedure testing for patients, see [Inpatient/Outpatient Medical Services](#) for more details (note: pre-procedure patients should NOT be sent to Health Department clinics)
- Symptomatic patients referred by primary care
- Quarantined patients referred by primary care
- Some hospitals may provide specialized testing (e.g., via mobile units, for those experiencing homelessness, nursing homes)

FQHC Testing (ordering provider is FQHC provider):

- Preventive testing of their own staff and health care staff who are their patients
- Pre-procedure testing for patients
- Symptomatic patients (if able to test safely)
- Quarantined patients who wish to end quarantine early with a negative test
- Some FQHCs may provide specialized testing (e.g., via mobile units, for those experiencing homelessness, nursing homes)

Primary Care Testing (ordering provider is primary care):

- Patients in quarantine who have remained asymptomatic and wish to end quarantine early with a negative test
- Symptomatic patients (if able to test safely)
- Other health care staff (who are the patients of primary care) who need preventive testing

EMS Testing (when working with Health, ordering provider is Commissioner Levine – but must have Health Department staff on site if conducting a clinic):

- Mobile specimen collections for homebound patients and symptomatic patients who are not eligible for other forms of public transportation to access testing sites.
- Augment Health Department staff in outbreak response.

Visiting nurses/home health (must have an ordering provider):

- Mobile specimen collection for homebound patients, and symptomatic patients who are not eligible for other forms of public transportation to access testing sites.
- Support for congregate living testing.

Pharmacy Testing (pharmacist is the ordering provider):

- Individuals in quarantine who wish to end quarantine early with a negative test
 - Particularly travelers and tourists who do not have a primary care provider in Vermont
- Asymptomatic individuals who are concerned they may have been exposed
- Health care staff (e.g. visiting nurses, dentists)

Urgent Care Testing (urgent care provider is ordering provider):

- Pre-procedure testing for patients
- Symptomatic patients
- Patients in quarantine who wish to end quarantine early with a negative test
- Health care staff

Colleges (university/college clinician is ordering provider, unless contracting out):

- Students and staff

Which laboratory processes the tests?

Health Department Laboratory

- The Health Department Laboratory is reserved for all Health Department testing, outbreak response, voluntary psychiatric admissions and Department of Corrections testing.

UVMCC

- Receive COVID-19 specimens and triage them out for testing either in-house or in an out-of-state laboratory for all providers that do not have a different reference laboratory.

Hospital laboratories

- Some Vermont hospitals have their own laboratories which are used per policies and decisions made by that hospital.

Commercial laboratories

- Commercial laboratories will send specimen collection kits out to providers and process returned specimens. Some hospitals and providers have contracts with these entities.

How do providers access specimen collection kits/testing materials?

Primary care providers and FQHCs

- Through reference laboratories.
- Additionally, State Emergency Operations Center and UVMCC are developing a process to fulfill specimen collection requests from primary care and FQHCs.

Hospitals

- Through reference laboratories and traditional suppliers.

- Additionally, the State Emergency Operations Center is exploring ways to coordinate supply acquisition.

Pharmacies

- Pharmacies must work with a reference laboratory.

Who pays for testing?

Private insurance plans that are regulated by the [Vermont Department of Financial Regulation](#) are required to cover, without cost sharing, all COVID-19 PCR testing for any Vermonter for whom there is a valid provider order. This means that for hospitals, FQHCs, and primary care – all PCR testing that is ordered by a provider for a patient must be fully reimbursed.

Tests for uninsured Vermonters can be covered by the [HRSA COVID-19 Uninsured Program](#). This means that for uninsured patients for whom a provider orders a test, HRSA will cover the costs.

[Medicaid](#) and Medicare ([detailed](#), [infographic](#)) are required to cover in vitro diagnostic products (as defined in Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations) for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 or diagnosis of COVID-19, and the administration of those diagnostic products.

What about antigen and serology testing?

The Health Department is continuing to review the accuracy and validity of these tests, and the appropriate implementation of these types of testing platforms.

As of July 3, 2020, the Health Department is not recommending the use of either antigen or serology testing for general use in the population or places of employment.

As serology platforms continue to evolve, the Health Department will select a platform, train staff and develop a strategy for testing in Vermont.