



Department of
Aging

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor
Ursel J. McElroy, Director



Department of
Health

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor
Lance Himes, Interim Director

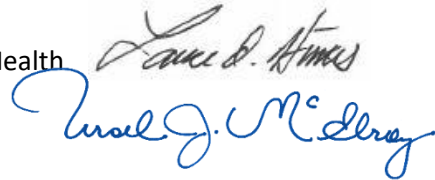
MEMORANDUM

TO: Nursing Home Administrators, Medical Directors, Directors of Nursing, and other staff responsible for COVID-19 testing of staff and residents
Local hospitals that partner with nursing homes to plan for and respond to COVID-19
Local health departments

FROM: Lance Himes, Interim Director, Ohio Department of Health
Ursel J. McElroy, Director, Ohio Department of Aging

DATE: October 20, 2020

RE: Updated Guidelines for the Testing of the Residents and Staff of all Nursing Homes



Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve and Ohio, much like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a surge in cases. Last week, new health data found that 29 counties currently have a very high risk of exposure and spread. Moreover, Ohio currently has 70 counties that are either red or high incidence. That's 10 million Ohioans or 85 percent of the population, living in an area with a high risk of community transmission. One tool we have to limit the spread of COVID-19 is testing and we must continually assess and adjust our testing strategy to protect all Ohioans, including our most vulnerable.

Updates to the Ohio Department of Health guidelines for the testing of the residents and staff of all nursing homes will become effective October 26, 2020, and minimally include weekly testing for all nursing homes. In addition to new guidelines, our processes have improved in an effort to increase compliance, decrease risks, and promote data uniformity.

The state-supported testing will:

- Implement a weekly testing program for all nursing homes for routine and outbreak testing
- Support compliance with CMS testing requirements
- Expand testing to include rapid antigen tests and PCR tests
- Align testing for nursing homes that share campuses with other facilities (e.g., assisted living)
- Optimize scheduling for predictability and consistency
- Streamline reporting requirements
- Centralize state support for long-term care testing

Action Steps

An informational video of the state's updated testing guidelines for nursing homes and new state-supported testing options will be published Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at coronavirus.ohio.gov. Please reserve time to familiarize yourself with this new information before October 26, 2020. This video will equip you with new information regarding scheduling, supplies, reporting, and much more. At the completion, you will be asked to indicate the level of state-supported testing needed for your facility.

Questions about COVID-19? Visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH for answers.