



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

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To: Healthcare Facilities
Health Departments
Physicians

From: Dr. Steven Stack, Commissioner
Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Department for Public Health

Date: March 10, 2020

RE: COVID-19 State Laboratory Testing

We are responding aggressively to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus situation in Kentucky.

As you are aware, our State Division of Laboratory Services (DLS) has the capacity to test for COVID-19, but this capacity is not unlimited due to limited commercial availability of necessary laboratory components and the lack of commercial availability of more fully automated testing. We are working to acquire resources as rapidly as the commercial market has them available to us.

As a consequence, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) must, out of necessity, conserve and prioritize testing for those at greatest need for evaluation from a public health standpoint. All tests requested through DLS must therefore be approved by the Department for Public Health.

I have instructed our epidemiologic and medical staff to consider the following in assessing patients for COVID-19 testing:

- Those who are not ill enough to be hospitalized and can remain at home in isolation should be referred for commercial lab testing, if treating clinicians determine testing is appropriate;
- Patients with COVID-19 symptoms (fever, lower respiratory illness) who could be infected with COVID-19 and who work in critical settings where vulnerable populations might be exposed will receive a higher priority for testing. For example, healthcare workers and those working in congregate settings like jails, long-term care facilities, and schools would be a priority;

- Those with critical illness for which all other pathogens have been ruled out and there is an unusual clinical course or clear exposure reported (to another COVID-19 confirmed case or travel to countries with sustained community spread);
- We will not consider testing asymptomatic patients, as these results do not offer accurate findings in these patients who could be infected but not viremic at the time of testing.

We would like to encourage clinicians who wish to rule out COVID-19 as a possible etiology in complex cases not fitting into the above criteria to consider submitting specimens to available commercial laboratories. Several of the major national reference laboratories are either able to conduct COVID-19 testing or are coming on line shortly. Any positive results received through a laboratory other than DLS must be reported to KDPH on an EPID-200 Reportable Disease Report Form.

We appreciate all that you have done in partnering with us to respond to this novel coronavirus outbreak. It is only through your diligent clinical work and coordination with public health that we can succeed in reducing the impact of this disease on the citizens of the Commonwealth!