



ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

DATE: April 19, 2020

TO: All Physician Practices

Guidance for Private Physician Practices Operating Specimen Collection Sites
Please Distribute Immediately to All Physician Practices

The NYS Department of Health has become aware of physician practices operating large-scale specimen collection sites to collect samples from patients for submission to laboratories for COVID-19 testing. Any such physician practices must adhere to this guidance regarding specimen collection and testing.

General Requirements

- Practices must ensure the sample collection process and site layout includes environmental controls to prevent exposure to COVID-19 and avoids any unnecessary gathering that would violate the Governor's Executive Order. This should include a process for pre-screening patients for symptoms. Patients should be provided with scheduled appointment times for sample collection.
- Samples must be sent to a laboratory qualified to perform COVID-19 testing.

Outside Area

- Practices must provide at least 6 feet between individuals in queue for testing.
- Practices must implement appropriate environmental controls to prevent a large number of individuals from assembling outside the physician office.
- Practices must have traffic and pedestrian safety protocols in place. Practices should work with local law enforcement in the set up and ongoing operation of the site.

Enclosed Space

- Any enclosed space must have controls in place to keep at least 6 feet between individuals, except during collection of the sample.
- The enclosed space must have adequate Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliant ventilation, to decrease possible airborne transmission of COVID-19.

Staff

- Practice personnel must have basic training regarding COVID-19. Personnel must have personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect against the transmission of the virus. Check-in procedures must be designed to avoid direct contact with personnel.
- Individuals collecting the specimen samples must be trained on how to don and doff PPE per OSHA and CDC guidelines, and fit-tested for appropriate N-95 masks, if required for specimen collection method.

- PPE must be appropriate for the specimen collection method, and may consist of gloves, gown, face shield, and appropriate respiratory protection (N-95 respirator masks or facemask depending on sample collection method).
- Personnel not collecting samples should maintain at least a 6 feet distance from patients.
- Practices should track all personnel at the site, daily, including hours worked. Practices should conduct twice daily health screening and temperature checks on all clinical and administrative personnel. Any personnel who develop symptoms should be sent home immediately and the practice should follow-up with them remotely to coordinate testing, as appropriate based on current criteria.
- Practices should have a protocol in place to track all possible exposures at the site, including identifying potentially exposed personnel/patients.

Samples

- Samples must be labeled using a method that guarantees accuracy and that is consistent with the requirement of the laboratory conducting the COVID-19 testing.
- Samples must be processed and sent to the laboratory in an OSHA compliant manner.

Results

- Results must be tracked.
- Results must be given to patients in a timely manner.
- Positive results must be immediately reported to the local Department of Health by the laboratory performing the test, per established guidance, and all test results should be reported by the laboratories into New York State Department of Health's Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS) four times a day.