



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants

Date: March 5, 2020

From: Epidemiology and Immunizations Services Branch, Public Health Services

Health Advisory Update #3: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

This health advisory updates local providers that on March 4, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [updated criteria](#) for evaluation of persons under investigation (PUI) to a wider group of symptomatic patients.

The CDC recommends that clinicians use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested for SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for causing COVID-19. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing).

In the coming weeks, it is anticipated that clinicians will have access to laboratory testing for diagnosing COVID-19 through clinical laboratories. At this time, given limited capacity and no documented community spread in the county, the [San Diego County Public Health Laboratory](#) (SDCPHL) will be testing patients with fever and acute respiratory illness who:

- Have had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Develop symptoms within 14 days of returning from affected geographic areas with widespread or sustained community transmission including China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, and Japan. CDC defines relevant affected areas as locations with at least a CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice. See all [COVID-19 Travel Health Notices](#).
- Have severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza, RSV), regardless of travel or exposure history.

Providers who wish to obtain testing at SDCPHL should:

- Conduct a thorough medical evaluation of potential cases utilizing appropriate infection control precautions. Standard respiratory pathogen testing (especially influenza testing) and chest radiographs should be conducted as clinically indicated.
- Utilize their usual infection control and infectious disease resources and protocols to determine that a patient meets the criteria listed above to warrant testing for SARS-CoV-2.
- **Obtain pre-approval** by the County Epidemiology Unit by calling 619-692-8499 during normal business hours (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM), or 858-565-5255 after hours, on weekends, and County-observed holidays.

- Document all requested demographic and clinical information on the [CDC PUI form](#) and submit with completed [SDCPHL submission forms](#) for each specimen type. Two specimens are required (nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swabs) in separate viral transport media containers with the specimen source documented on the label.
- Healthcare facilities are responsible for transporting specimens and required forms to SDCPHL. Specimens will not be received or tested by SDCPHL after business hours.
- Questions about specimen submission should be directed to SDCPHL during business hours at 619-692-8500, option 1, or by [email](#).

As this situation continues to evolve rapidly, providers should consistently monitor CDC recommendations at the [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 website](#).

General public inquiries about COVID-19 should be directed to [2-1-1 San Diego](#) or to the [County COVID-19 website](#).

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

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