Clinical laboratories have announced that COVID-19 testing is now or will soon be available. The CDC has also recently liberalized its guidance for potential testing to a wider group of symptomatic patients. Providers should anticipate transitioning to using commercial laboratories for clinical testing.

**Recommendations for Providers**

- Begin transitioning to working with clinical laboratories for COVID-19 testing
- Report all laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases immediately to the Orange County Health Care Agency at 714-834-8180 (after hours 714-628-7008)
- Report suspect COVID-19 cases with specific risk factors (see below)
- This situation continues to evolve rapidly; providers should consistently monitor CDC recommendations at [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

**COVID-19 Public Health Reporting Mandates**

OCHCA does not need to be informed of every suspect case who is tested for COVID-19 infection using a commercial laboratory. But to assist with investigation and potential patient isolation, OCHCA should be informed of any symptomatic patient who fits any of the following criteria:

- Develops symptoms within 14 days of returning from a country of risk (including China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, and Japan)
- Is a contact of a confirmed case (including health care workers)
- Resides at a skilled nursing facility

Per Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations Section 2500, a novel virus infection with pandemic potential such as COVID-19 requires immediate reporting. Accordingly, all patients who test laboratory positive for COVID-19 should be reported immediately to OCHCA by clinicians and laboratories.

**OCHCA Public Health Laboratory Testing Capacity**

As commercial laboratories’ testing becomes available, the OCHCA Public Health Laboratory will continue to provide testing for 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.
- Have severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza), regardless of travel or exposure history.
- Reside at a skilled nursing facility
CDC’s updated guidance can be found at [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html). Providers should instruct any patient tested for COVID-19 to self-isolate at home until results are available.

Diagnosis is confirmed by PCR testing of appropriate clinical specimens. CDC recommends the collection of:
- Upper respiratory (nasopharyngeal AND oropharyngeal swabs)
- Lower respiratory if available (tracheal aspirate, bronchoalveolar lavage specimens, or sputum)

If a lower respiratory tract specimen is not obtainable, upper respiratory may be submitted alone for testing. Specimens should be stored at 2-8°C and sent by courier to Orange County Public Health Laboratory prior to shipment to the CDC.


**Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)**

**Contact Information**

For questions or concerns, please contact the **Communicable Disease Control Division at 714-834-8180.**