



# Health Advisory: COVID-19 Testing Without Prior Approval at the SFPDH Public Health Lab

April 14, 2020

## **CHANGE IN SFPHL COVID-19 TEST APPROVAL POLICY**

The San Francisco Public Health Laboratory (SFPHL) will now accept COVID-19 specimens for testing **without requiring prior approval by** SFPDH. This change should increase availability of COVID-19 testing for prioritized patient populations and streamline test ordering for providers.

Specimens sent for testing must be from patients in priority groups for testing at SFPHL. This prioritization has not changed from prior guidance. Please refer to the March 27, 2020 Health Advisory "Prioritizing Testing For COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus Infection" <https://www.sfgcdcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Testing-COVID19-Health-Advisory-FINAL-03.27.2020.pdf>.

If you need to discuss whether a patient qualifies for testing at SFPHL, you may call the SFPDH COVID-19 Clinical Consultation line between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. every day at 415-554-2830.

## **UPDATED REQUISITION FORM**

A new requisition form has been created specifically for testing of COVID-19 specimens at SFPHL. The form is posted at [www.sfgcdcp.org/public-health-lab/forms-specimen-culture-submission/](http://www.sfgcdcp.org/public-health-lab/forms-specimen-culture-submission/). Please fill out the form completely; if essential fields are left blank, the sample may not be tested.

## **UPDATED SPECIMEN COLLECTION AND HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS**

Updated instructions have been posted at [www.sfgcdcp.org/covid19hcp](http://www.sfgcdcp.org/covid19hcp) under Clinical and Testing Guidance. A nasopharyngeal swab placed in viral transport media remains the preferred specimen, however the list of alternative anatomical sites and transport media has been updated in accordance with new CDC guidance.

Please note that SFPHL cannot provide testing supplies or personal protective equipment.

**Specimen Transport:** Hospitals and other large private providers should arrange for transport of the specimens to SFPHL. The lab will accept specimens between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. weekdays at 101 Grove St, Room 419, or 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the weekend. If you are a provider without the capacity to arrange for specimen transport (e.g. through a courier service), please coordinate with SFPDH by calling 415-554-2830.



## **RESULTS**

Results will be faxed from SFPHL to the provider listed on the requisition form, generally within 24 hours after specimens are received at the lab.

For questions about results, call Public Health Lab at 415-554-2800 during the hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays or 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the weekend.

Please note that during periods of high demand for testing due to acute COVID-19 outbreaks in the community, SFPHL may need to delay resulting of non-outbreak-related tests by up to 24 additional hours.

## **LABORATORY REPORTING OF COVID-19 RESULTS TO PUBLIC HEALTH**

On March 24, 2020, the San Francisco Health Officer ordered all laboratories conducting COVID-19 diagnostic tests to report COVID-19 test information – positive, negative, and inconclusive results – to the California Department of Public Health via CalREDIE, and if that is not possible then by fax or phone to the San Francisco Department of Public Health. For details see:

<https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/Order-No-C19-10-ReportingOnly-03242020.pdf>

Providers are also required to report cases of COVID-19 to the county health department where the patient resides. Additional guidance regarding provider reporting is forthcoming.

### **Program Contact Information:**

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