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Note: Contact information for the Alaska Section of Epidemiology can be found at the end of this message.

Alaska Public Health Alert

Expanded Criteria for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Persons Under Investigation (PUI) Testing in Alaska

March 6, 2020

Summary

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated criteria for considering Persons Under Investigation (PUI) on March 4, 2020 to expand testing to a wider group of symptomatic patients. Although testing capacity across the country continues to be limited, additional supplies have been received in Alaska which enable testing criteria for PUI to be further broadened. Moreover, commercial laboratories are bringing COVID-19 testing on-line. The intent of this brief message is to alert Alaska health care providers to broadening criteria for testing as well as the current testing schedule at the Alaska State Public Health Laboratories; the development of capacity at commercial laboratories; and to emphasize the ongoing need to report PUI regarding of testing location.

Reporting

Health care providers should continue to contact the Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) at 907-269-8000, or 800-478-0084 after-hours to report Persons Under Investigation (PUI) as defined in the Alaska-specific guidance dated March 4, 2020 (available [here](#)). Additionally, health care providers who suspect a patient to have COVID-19 and plan to submit specimens to commercial laboratories, should still report those PUI to SOE to ensure awareness and prompt follow-up should results be positive.

Testing Criteria for the State Public Health Laboratories

- The patient has a [clinically compatible illness](#) **AND**
 - Close contact to a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19
 - **OR** a history of travel within the past 14 days to an [affected geographic area](#) (e.g., the patient just returned from Northern Italy a week ago or Kirkland, WA 3 days ago) without an alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza).
- **OR** the patient has fever and respiratory illness requiring hospitalization and the clinician would like to rule out COVID-19 because no alternative explanatory diagnosis has been identified.
- All others will need to be considered in consultation with SOE on a case-by-case basis.

Specimen Collection Information

- Specimen collection details are on page 23 of the [Laboratory Test Directory](#).
- Instructions for obtaining a nasopharyngeal swab are available on [page 95](#).

Testing Schedule for the State Public Health Laboratories

- Most specimens will be batched daily; results expected at 2-4PM 7 days a week.
- After consultations with SOE, certain specimens may be run on a STAT basis.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, please check the SOE's [COVID-19 website](#) often for updates.

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