Center for Policy, Planning and Evaluation
Division of Epidemiology – Disease Surveillance and Investigation

March 26, 2020

**Health Notice for District of Columbia Healthcare Providers**

**Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

**Updated Priorities for Testing Patients with Suspected COVID-19 Infection and Updated Prioritization of Contact Tracing by DC Health**

**Summary**

Testing for Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) is now available through the DC Public Health Laboratory, commercial laboratories and some hospital-based clinical laboratories. While increasing testing capacity will allow clinicians to consider COVID-19 testing for a wider group of symptomatic patients, clinicians should also keep in mind that there is a national shortage of tests reagents and supplies.

- Clinicians should take into consideration the testing priorities listed in this health notice when evaluating a patient with respiratory symptoms and continue testing for other more common respiratory viruses.
- Clinicians should appropriately guide their patients on home quarantine while test results are pending.
- Clinicians should be prepared to provide patients who test positive for COVID-19 with home-isolation guidelines and information for household and close contacts (DC Health will now be limiting contact tracing to specific situations and high priority groups).

DC Health has updated testing priorities in DC based upon the updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released on March 24th (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html).

**COVID-19 Testing Priorities in the District of Columbia**

**Priority 1**

Ensures optimal care options for all hospitalized patients, lessen the risk of healthcare-associated infections, and maintain the integrity of the U.S. healthcare system. This includes:

- Hospitalized patients
- Healthcare facility workers with symptoms

**Priority 2**

Ensures those at highest risk of complication of infection are rapidly identified and appropriately triaged. This includes:

- Patients in long-term care facilities with symptoms
- Patients 65 years of age and older with symptoms
- Patients with underlying conditions with symptoms
- First responders with symptoms

**Priority 3**

As resources allow, test individuals in the surrounding community of rapidly increasing hospital cases to decrease community spread, and ensure health of essential workers. This includes:

- Critical infrastructure workers with symptoms
Individuals who do not meet any of the above categories with symptoms
Healthcare facility workers and first responders
Individuals with mild symptoms in communities experiencing high numbers of COVID-19 hospitalizations

NON-PRIORITY
• Individuals without symptoms

Important Infection Control and Specimen Collection Reminders

Please ensure that appropriate infection control precautions are in place when triaging and assessing suspected COVID-19 patients. Guidance on this can be found on the DC Health website (https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/health-notices):

- March 13, 2020 Health Notice: https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1466696

Please ensure that the most current specimen collection and submission guidelines are followed when submitting specimens for COVID-19 testing through the DC Public Health Laboratory. Details can be found in the following documents:
- March 20, 2020 Health Notice: https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1468216

Guidance for Patients with Pending or Positive COVID-19 Test Results

Due to the community spread of COVID-19 in DC, DC Health is now only conducting contact tracing investigations for specific situations (such as outbreaks, persons employed in occupations deemed to be at high risk of spreading COVID-19, etc.). Therefore, clinicians who order COVID-19 tests should be prepared to advise their patients on home-quarantine while test results are pending and home-isolation when a patients' tests are positive. Below are some current DC Health resources available to assist with this process:

- Guidance for contacts of a person confirmed to have COVID-19 (use this for patients who have pending COVID-19 test results): https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1468481
- Guidance for household members, intimate contacts and caregivers of persons confirmed to have COVID-19: https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1468471

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit https://coronavirus.dc.gov/ and the DC Health (https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/health-notices) and CDC websites regularly for the most current information.

Please contact the DC Health regarding COVID-19 Division of Epidemiology–Disease Surveillance and Investigation at:

Phone: 202-576-1117 Fax: 202-442-8060 | Email: coronavirus@dc.gov