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

March 26, 2020

<u>**Health Notice for District of Columbia Healthcare Providers**</u>
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

<u>Priority 1</u>

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

<u>Priority 2</u>

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

<u>Priority 3</u>

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 26, 2020: Guidance for Conservation of Personal Protective Equipment: https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1469386
- March 13, 2020 Health Notice: https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1466696
- March 13, 2020 Guidance for Skilled Nursing Facilities: https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1468466

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 persons who test positive for COVID-19**: https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/1468491
- **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:

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