

COVID-19 Active Infection Survey of Indiana Nursing Facility Staff

Background: On May 11th, 2020, the White House set out its goal of testing all residents and staff in long term care facilities. CMS followed that announcement on May 18th, 2020, with a [memo for state and local officials regarding nursing home reopening recommendations which includes access to adequate testing for residents and staff](#). COVID-19 has had a disproportionate effect on residents and staff at long-term care facilities. The congregate nature of these facilities, the medical vulnerabilities of the residents, and the asymptomatic spread of the virus among staff have contributed to long-term care deaths making up nearly 50% of deaths in the state. Decreasing outbreaks in facilities and subsequent deaths will require continued attention to infection control practices and the reduction of asymptomatic viral transmission. Testing is a key component in reducing asymptomatic viral spread. For testing to be most effective, staff in long-term care facilities may need to undergo coronavirus testing at regularly scheduled intervals. How frequent testing needs to occur and whether all staff in all facilities require the same testing frequency is unknown. Furthermore, the barriers to testing all long-term care staff are not fully known. To address these important questions, Indiana will help facilitate COVID-19 testing of all skilled nursing home staff in June to identify current numbers of asymptomatic staff in these facilities. This effort does not include residential care facilities and assisted living. This data, combined with other datasets, discussions with stakeholders, and qualitative interviews with front-line staff about testing, will be used to inform future guidance.

In order for this testing effort in June 2020 to be an effective indicator for future decision-making, it is imperative that all skilled nursing facilities and all staff within those facilities participate in this testing. Therefore, *ISDH is mandating participation* in this COVID-19 testing during the month of June. In an effort to minimize initial impact on nursing facilities, ISDH is partnering with the Indiana National Guard and OptumHealth to provide this testing free of charge to all skilled nursing facility staff and other contract workers/vendors who are in the facility.

Method: Beginning June 15th, in partnership with OptumHealth, ISDH will work with skilled nursing facilities to have all staff in those facilities tested. ISDH will either provide test kits to skilled nursing facilities or schedule time with the facility for an OptumHealth team to test all facility staff.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the timeframe for this testing? ISDH is planning for this initiative to begin June 15 and end by June 30th.

Is this a mandate? Yes, this is a mandate. This initial survey will help inform ongoing testing policy. All facilities are expected to have all staff tested.

Who should get tested? All nursing home staff. This includes staff involved in direct patient care (e.g., CNAs, nurses, attending physicians) as well as those not involved in direct patient care (administrative, housekeeping, meals service, contract employees) and any staff who come into the facility on a regular basis (e.g., housekeeping, administration medical directors, attending physicians, etc.)

Are there any exclusions? This requirement excludes staff who have already undergone coronavirus testing in June and can provide those results to the facility or any staff who have previously had a positive coronavirus test (via PCR testing not serology).

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Does this include staff that are not involved in direct patient care? Yes, all staff who work in the facility regardless of their role must be tested.

Does this include contract staff and those going to multiple facilities? Yes, contract staff (e.g., medical directors, physical therapy) must also undergo testing. If they have already been tested at another facility or have already been tested in the month of June they are exempt.

What test and sampling technique is acceptable? Only molecular testing for coronavirus will be considered acceptable. This includes the traditional lab-based testing using polymerase chain reaction or the point of care testing using similar techniques (e.g., Abbott ID Now). Serology testing is not acceptable at this time as this survey is measuring active infection rates. For onsite testing (either by ISDH or the facility) NP swabs will be used.

Will we get to pick the day and time? Due to the extreme volume and deadline for completing testing, ISDH has determined the routes and schedule so that testing can be completed by 6/30. Drop off times will vary for the day scheduled. Specimens will be collected from facilities 24 hours after drop off.

What time period will be provided between when the test kits are dropped off and when they are picked up? The facility must collect all samples within 24 hours of receiving the kits in order to maintain the integrity of the sample for testing. The facility will be responsible for separately testing all staff, or directing them to Optum testing sites, not available during those 24 hours.

If a facility collects samples themselves, how should the samples be stored and when will ISDH pick them up? Samples must be stored before specimen collection at room temperature or below 80 degrees (F). After collection, samples must be kept at refrigeration temperature, upright at 2-8 degrees (C) or 35-47 degrees (F). Specimens will be collected from facilities 24 hours after drop off.

If a facility chooses the 4-hour window of on-site testing, can that testing team leave testing kits behind that the facility can administer for those staff that cannot make the 4-hour window? Since we are utilizing Optum's lab capacity and transport, ISDH will not be able to accommodate this request at this time.

Will the ISDH, Indiana National Guard and Optum personnel conducting the tests at facilities themselves be tested before the effort begins? All of the staff who conduct testing will wear appropriate PPE during sample collection.

What if staff refuse? If any staff refuses testing, the facility should record the refusal and the reason why and be able to provide this information to ISDH. For this point in time study, refusal does not have implications from the state's perspective on continued work in the facility.

What if an employee prefers to be tested at an existing Optum site? This is acceptable and ISDH will work with Optum to see if they can work their system at these sites to include the staff data as part of an existing facilities data. To ensure the facility has visibility on all of their employees testing status, the employee is required to provide confirmation of testing and the result to the facility if they are not part of the facility's on-site testing.

If a staff has already had a test in June, do they need to be tested again? No, any staff that has already had a COVID-19 viral test in June and can provide the result to the facility (employer) will not need to

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have the test repeated. The facility must be able to report these results as part of this study. If the result is not available, the staff will need to be retested.

If a staff has already had a test in May, do they need to be tested again? Yes. June 1 is the earliest date a sample could be obtained in order to be considered compliant with this testing initiative. No swabs collected prior to June 1 will be accepted.

If staff have previously had COVID-19 confirmed by a viral PCR test do they need to be tested again? No, any staff that has been previously diagnosed as having COVID-19 using a viral test (not serology) does require repeat testing at this time. Facilities should be able to provide the names of staff who have had a positive test.

If staff has had a serology (e.g., blood) test showing they had COVID-19, will they need to be tested again? Yes, they still need to be tested using the viral PCR test. A prior serology test (showing presence or absence of antibodies) will not exclude a staff from this testing requirement.

If a staff lives in another state but works in an Indiana nursing home will they be able to be tested? Yes, however, out of state employees cannot register online and must call Optum Customer Service at **(888) 634-1116** to schedule an appointment if they cannot otherwise access the testing kits delivered to the nursing facility or they are not available for the onsite testing.

Will the facilities get the results? Yes. Results for employees tested through the ISDH testing initiative will be provided to the employee within 5 – 7 days. ISDH will also share with the facility the results of those who have been tested within 5-7 days of sample collection. ISDH will work with facility to provide timely updates until all employees tested results have been accounted for with each facility.

How will the results be returned? Results are accessible through a secured website operated by Optum. Each participant will receive a unique code to log in and retrieve results. Additionally, Optum has a customer service toll free phone number to assist in obtaining results. Facilities will receive a report from ISDH on the results of the tests for their staff.

Can a facility indicate that a central business office be copied on the results? Optum Registration site includes a release stating “Please note, per state guidelines, your results will be shared with your employer by the state public health department for purposes of public health surveillance”.

How long will it take to get the results? We anticipate results being back between 5-7 days of ISDH delivery to the lab.

Are nursing facility staff permitted to continue working while their results are pending? Yes, nursing facility staff who are not showing symptoms may continue working while their results are pending. Infection prevention and control practices should be maintained at all times, including screening all staff for symptoms at the start of each shift and wearing masks.

What will the state do with the results? This data will be used to determine the rate of asymptomatic COVID positive workers in skilled nursing facilities. This information will be used to formulate guidelines around additional testing requirements and their periodicity.

If a staff tests positive but has no symptoms, will they be permitted to continue working? If the facility has no COVID-dedicated areas, COVID-positive staff will have to quarantine at home per CDC

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recommendations for 10 days. If the facility has a COVID-dedicated area and is currently under a staffing shortage, the COVID-positive staff may continue to work in the COVID-dedicated area of the facility following CDC guidance - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html>

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