

Emerging Infections Program COVID Specimen Submission and Variant Reporting Requirements

This guidance document outlines a new specimen submission requirement for specimens positive for COVID which have not been previously genetically sequenced. It also reiterates the existing requirement that if specimens are genetically sequenced locally or through a contracted lab, those results must be submitted electronically to TDH. Please contact COVID19.testing@tn.gov with any questions not covered in this document or associated linked reference materials.

Who does this guidance apply to?

This reporting and specimen submission requirement only applies to facilities within the Middle Tennessee Emerging Infections Program (EIP) catchment area which includes all acute care facilities within Davidson, Cheatham, Robertson, Sumner, Wilson, Rutherford, Dickson, or Williamson Counties.

When does this guidance take effect?

This guidance is in effect as of November 1, 2021. We anticipate making this a permanent specimen submission and reporting requirement per TN Administrative Rules effective January 1, 2022. This reporting and submission guidance is **in addition** to previously established COVID reporting requirements. Please see the most up to date comprehensive reporting information [online](#).

What is required to be reported?

All facilities that test specimens for COVID and can conduct genetic sequencing on those specimens are required to report those sequencing results to TDH. Please see [COVID Variant Reporting Guidance](#) for more details about how to submit that information.

Which specimens are required to be submitted to the State Public Health Lab?

Any respiratory specimen from an acute care facility in the Middle Tennessee EIP catchment area that is positive by a molecular diagnostic test for SARS-CoV-2 (and has not/will not be sequenced at another laboratory) should be submitted to the State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) **regardless of the patient's vaccination status or other criteria**.

If your lab uses send outs or a contract lab for COVID testing, and you are in the designated catchment area, then your facility must still ensure that specimens are submitted to SPHL.

How should I submit specimens to the State Public Health Lab?

Please refer to the [guidance](#) posted online to review specimen submission instructions and required registration information for the SPHL Lab Web Portal (LWP). Please do not submit paper requisitions. The LWP must be used to request specimens for whole genome sequencing at the State Public Health Lab.

Will I receive these sequencing results back?

Your facility will receive the variant information, or other relevant results, from the whole genome sequencing testing via the SPHL Lab Web Portal. These results should **not** be used in clinical decision making nor patient care.

Do I have to report variant results received from the State Public Health Lab back to TDH as part of my COVID reporting requirements?

No, you do not need to re-report variant information received at your facility for tests conducted at the State Public Health Lab (SPHL). This information is already electronically reported to TDH's COVID surveillance systems.