

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to facilitate **optional weekly** COVID-19 testing among staff in licensed assisted living facilities and residential homes for the aged as outlined Long-term Care Facility Primer ([here](#)). Questions about testing should be directed to [COVID19.Testing@tn.gov](mailto:COVID19.Testing@tn.gov). Questions about the Emergency Rule should be directed to Healthcare Licensure and Regulation at [OHCF.health@tn.gov](mailto:OHCF.health@tn.gov). Questions about invoicing should be directed to [Covid.Invoices@tn.gov](mailto:Covid.Invoices@tn.gov).

**Please note:** This does **not** apply to staff members who are experiencing symptoms. Anyone who is symptomatic should not be allowed into the facility and should call their healthcare provider immediately.

## **Specimen Collection**

Below are a few options for specimen collection:

- Have employees visit a TN Health Department Remote Assessment site <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/health/cedep/ncov/remote-assessment-sites.html>
- If facility has licensed clinical staff, train to collect nasopharyngeal swabs
  - NEJM Collection of Nasopharyngeal Specimens with the Swab Technique Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVJNWefmHjE>
- Contract with a home health agency to collect specimens and bill the State
- Utilize a laboratory that offers staff to collect specimens
- Utilize a laboratory with non-traditional specimen collection options (such as observed self-collection or self-collected nasal swabs / saliva specimen testing)

## **Laboratory**

Options for testing:

- 1. The Tennessee Department of Health highly encourages the use of commercial laboratories for weekly staff COVID-19 testing.**
2. If the facility does not have a relationship with a commercial lab that tests for SARS-CoV-2, Tennessee requests that the facility identify a lab that can establish a service contract and perform testing.
  - Appendix I (Weekly LTCF Staff Testing Laboratory Options) contains an in-depth list of laboratory testing options.
3. If all other options are exhausted, testing may be completed at the State Public Health Lab. Please contact [COVID19.Testing@tn.gov](mailto:COVID19.Testing@tn.gov) for more information and testing approval.

For facilities testing through commercial/private labs:

- The State of Tennessee will reimburse the facility up to \$100 per test.
  - Guidance for reimbursement below.
- All specimen collection kits must be provided by the private lab.
- Tests used by private lab must have received an FDA Emergency Use Authorization.
  - Found [here](#).
- Private labs must report positive and negative tests per TDH reporting rules.
  - Found [here](#).

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

How to calculate PPE needs:

- 2 **gloves** (1 pair) per employee per week
- 5-10 **gowns** per facility per week to complete staff swabs over several shifts
- 5-10 **face masks** and **face shields** per facility per week (surgical masks and face shields should only be changed if soiled) changing to complete swabs over several shifts

Requesting PPE:

1. Quantify the amount of PPE the facility will need to test every employee once a week for **two weeks**
2. Enter Request for PPE into [Survey 123](#). Step-by-step guidance provided in Appendix.
3. TEMA will ship a two-week supply of requested PPE to the facility.
4. TEMA will provide PPE to facilities, upon their request, until further notice.

Instructions for PPE Use:

1. Gloves should be changed and hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) performed after each employee. One pair of gloves should only be used for the collection of one test.
2. Gowns, masks, and face shields may be worn for the testing of multiple employees provided that the items are not visibly soiled.
3. All elements of PPE (gowns, gloves, masks, and face shields) should only be worn by a single person (not shared among testers).
4. Discard PPE at the end of the testing event (for example, do not wear over multiple days if testing is not completed during one event).

*Please note:* if self-collection methods are being utilized, PPE is not necessary.

## **Reporting and Patient Notification**

By

Please report all positive test results by either 1) Faxing a [PH-1600 Form](#) and a copy of the positive laboratory report to 615-741-3857 or 2) calling your local health department. You can

find contact information for your local health department here  
<https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/localdepartments.html>

The ordering provider will be responsible for informing staff of their test results.

## **Compliance**

Testing of staff is highly encouraged but not required. Compliance questions should be addressed to Health Licensure and Regulation ([ohcf.health@tn.gov](mailto:ohcf.health@tn.gov)).

## **Reimbursement**

*Please note, testing will be reimbursed by the State up to \$100 per test.*

To request reimbursement for staff testing:

1. Ensure your facility is registered in Edison (State vendor system) for reimbursement. Contact [Covid.Invoices@tn.gov](mailto:Covid.Invoices@tn.gov) if your facility needs to become a vendor in Edison.
2. Facility administers weekly staff COVID-19 testing with laboratory of choice.
3. Lab processes tests, reports results to facility, and separately invoices facility for the tests of its nursing home patients batched by facility, not corporate entity.
4. Facility submits an invoice “net due in 15 days” to the TN Department of Health (TDH) supported by the invoice from the lab, confirmation of the testing event date, and the confirmation of facility staff tested. Facility sends electronically to: [Covid.Invoices@tn.gov](mailto:Covid.Invoices@tn.gov).
5. TDH processes the invoice for payment to facility within 15 days.
6. Facility then processes the original invoice from lab for payment with funds received from TDH.

*Please note, several laboratories (denoted on the LTCF Laboratory Options list) allow direct billing of the State. The reimbursement mechanism outlined above is preferred, but for facilities working with those labs, direct billing of TDH will be allowed. Facilities utilizing this mechanism must review a copy of the lab invoice and send an attestation to TDH at [Covid.Invoices@tn.gov](mailto:Covid.Invoices@tn.gov) confirming its accuracy.*