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New Mexico Department of Health Issues Guidance to Healthcare Providers Regarding Viral Collection Kits and Processing of COVID-19 Specimens

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The New Mexico Department of Health Scientific Laboratory Division (NMDOH SLD) reminds healthcare providers that COVID-19 collection kits are no different from standard viral transport kits for the submission of samples for testing. As long as the media is intended to transport viruses, it will satisfy the requirement. Universal transport medium and M4 media are included in this approved category.

For initial diagnostic testing for COVID-19, CDC recommends collecting and testing an upper respiratory nasopharyngeal swab (NP). Collection of oropharyngeal swabs (OP) is a lower priority and if collected should be combined in the same tube as the NP. Collection of sputum should only be done for those patients with productive coughs. Induction of sputum is not recommended. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset. Pre-approval for testing is not required.

Healthcare providers should coordinate with their routine commercial laboratory to request additional viral transport kits for submission of specimens. Facilities who are unable to obtain viral transport kits due to backorder, urgent need, or facilities and providers without a contracted private laboratory can contact the NMDOH Department Operations Center (DOC) at (505) 476-8284 or by e-mail at Section.DOC-Operations@state.nm.us to request viral transport kits from SLD.

Results of viral swabs submitted for COVID-19 will be provided to the submitting provider when testing results are completed. Practitioners are asked to not call to request results due to the current high call volume.

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