

COVID-19 TESTING GUIDANCE FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Issued: October 15, 2020

Updated: December 22, 2020; March 5, 2021

The following guidance is to be used for both nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Additionally, the nursing facility testing strategy may be updated if/when CMS releases new testing mandates.

Testing When a Staff Member or Resident tests positive/Hot Spot Testing

All “hot spot” testing requirements remain the same. Continue repeat viral testing of all previously negative residents and staff weekly, until the testing identifies no new cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection among residents or staff for a period of at least 14 days since the most recent positive result. Everyone will conduct at least 2 rounds of facility-wide testing.

NOTE: If a nursing facility is considered a ‘hot spot’ and also in a red county, the facility must test staff twice a week pursuant to Table 1 below and residents once a week.

Ongoing Screening of Staff

All facilities should test **all staff** at the frequency prescribed in Table 1: Routine Testing, based on the county positivity rate. Facilities should monitor their county positivity rate every other week (e.g., first and third Monday of every month) and adjust the frequency of performing staff testing according to the table below. See CMS regulation [QSO-20-38-NH](#). If a staff member is exposed or is exhibiting symptoms they should be tested and not permitted to work in any long-term care facility.

Resident Testing

Resident testing should occur in the following circumstances:

1. Resident is symptomatic;
2. Resident has had a known contact with a positive;
3. Resident regularly or routinely leaves the facility for medical appointments (e.g. for dialysis or chemotherapy).
 - a. Resident leaves once a week or more: test weekly
 - b. Resident leaves any less than once a week per month: test once a month
4. The facility has a new positive test and is considered a ‘hot spot’ requiring 100% testing of staff and residents for at least two consecutive weeks with no new positive tests identified.

NOTE: Previous staff or residents who tested positives through a laboratory test (NOT antigen) should not be retested for 90 days from the date they were identified as a positive.

TABLE 1: Routine Testing Intervals Vary by Community COVID-19 Activity Level*

Positivity Rate / Facility Status	Nursing Homes	Assisted Living Facilities
Hot Spot	<p>In a Red County: test 100% of staff twice a week. Test 100% of residents once a week.</p> <p>In a Yellow or Green County: test 100% of staff and residents once a week.</p> <p>Continue testing cadence until no new positive for 14 days.</p>	<p>Test 100% of staff and residents once a week until no new positive cases for 14 days.</p>
Red County	<p>Test staff twice a week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident leaves once a week or more: test weekly Resident leaves any less than once a week per month: test once a month 	<p>Test 100% of staff on a weekly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident leaves once a week or more: test weekly Resident leaves any less than once a week per month: test once a month
Yellow County	<p>Test all staff on a weekly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident leaves once a week or more: test weekly Resident leaves any less than once a week per month: test once a month 	<p>Test 50% of staff on a weekly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident leaves once a week or more: test weekly Resident leaves any less than once a week per month: test once a month
Green County	<p>Test 25% of staff weekly on a rotating basis to ensure every staff person is tested once a month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident leaves once a week or more: test weekly Resident leaves any less than once a week per month: test once a month 	<p>Test 25% of staff weekly on a rotating basis to ensure every staff person is tested once a month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident leaves once a week or more: test weekly Resident leaves any less than once a week per month: test once a month

*This frequency presumes availability of antigen testing on-site at the nursing home or where off-site testing frequency time is <48 hours.

County positivity rates can be found on <https://cv.nmhealth.org/long-term-care-visitation-guidelines/> website. Each facility’s county positivity rate will impact the testing frequency. Once the new positivity rate is identified, the facility must follow the above testing frequency to be in compliance.

Staff includes employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and caregivers who provide care and services to residents on behalf of the facility, and students in the facility’s nurse aide training programs or from affiliated academic institutions. For the purpose of testing “individuals providing services under arrangement and volunteers,” facilities should prioritize those who are regularly in the facility (e.g., weekly)



and have contact with residents or staff.

Antigen Testing Guidance

New Mexico recognizes that the antigen tests have limited use and is directing facilities to use antigen tests in the following circumstances ONLY:

1. Symptomatic staff and residents; and
 2. Exposed* staff or resident.
- **Nursing Homes:** all results, whether positive or negative must report requisite COVID-19 related data to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) per §483.80(g)(1) and (2) with 24 hours of receiving the result.
- **Assisted Living Facilities:** All SARS-CoV-2 laboratory results, whether positive or negative must reported along with related data to the new NHSN portal dedicated to antigen testing results within 24 hours of receiving the result. Reporting guidance will be updated as federal requirements are updated. In order to utilize the new Pathway to fulfill reporting requirements, nursing homes and other long-term care facilities who are NHSN users, will need to upgrade their NHSN Secure Access Management Service (SAMS) from Level 1 to Level 3.
- Contact the Informatics and Data Management Unit of the NMDOH Infectious Disease Epidemiology Bureau (IDEB) at DOH-ELR-Onboard@state.nm.us for technical assistance.

Who	Testing Instructions		Type of Testing
New positive staff or resident (rapid response initiated, facility considered hot spot)	Nursing Homes	100% testing of all staff and residents until no new positives are identified for at least 14 days from the initial positive test, If located in a red county – staff testing must be twice a week.	RT-PCR specimen for transport to laboratory
	Assisted Living Facilities	100% testing of all staff and residents until no new positives are identified for at least 14 days from the initial positive test	
Symptomatic staff or resident	Perform test of symptomatic staff or resident If the antigen test indicates positive no confirmatory test needed.		Antigen test if available and/or RT-PCR specimen for transport to laboratory if LTC does not have an antigen test or if the antigen test result is negative
Resident who leaves the facility regularly	Residents who leave once a week or more: Test weekly Residents who leave any less than once a week per month: Test once a month		RT-PCR specimen for transport to laboratory
Asymptomatic Staff	Nursing Homes	Test 100% of staff according to Table 2 schedule above	RT-PCR specimen for transport to laboratory
	Assisted Living Facilities	Test staff according to Table 1 schedule above	
Asymptomatic Residents	No testing unless resident leaves facility regularly, in response to an outbreak (rapid response, hot spot testing), or the resident had known close contact with someone other than a staff		RT-PCR specimen for transport to laboratory
Exposed Staff or Residents*	Immediately test directly exposed staff or residents when a new confirmed case is identified. Immediate results can identify other infected individuals, to isolate earlier and prevent further spread in the facility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the antigen test indicates a negative result, the person should do a confirmatory PCR test. This person should be treated as if they were positive pending receipt of the PCR test result. - If the antigen test indicates positive no confirmatory test needed. 		Antigen test and RT-PCR specimen for transport to laboratory