



**To: Home Health and Hospice Agencies**  
**From: New Mexico Department of Health**  
**Date: December 23, 2020**  
**Update: February 4, 2021**  
**Re: Letter of Direction**

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**All updates are in red.**

The Division on Health Improvement provides the following direction with respect to testing and vaccination activities related to COVID-19:

#### TESTING

- **To maximize the expediency of test result turnaround times, home health and hospice agencies are directed to immediately utilize the laboratory resource designated by the Department of Health - Curative. Facilities may not utilize a different laboratory.**
  - Agencies must begin testing with Curative Monday, January 18, 2021
- **The frequency of testing may increase pending a positive employee in the workplace and/or need for rapid response following an exposure in the workplace.**
- **Home health and hospice employers must provide written documentation of monthly testing compliance to all long-term care facilities which receive the agencies services.**
- Agencies should screen staff daily prior to visiting clients – a screening questionnaire can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>
- **For staff that are positive and completed their 14-day quarantine do not need to be tested for 90 days and are exempt from the monthly testing requirements for the 90 days.**
- Home health and hospice employers must ensure that everyone who has client interactions are tested regularly at least once per month (30 calendar days) for screening of COVID-19
  - This is not applicable to personal care option or consumer directed service.
  - The frequency of testing may increase pending a positive employee in the workplace and/or need for rapid response following an exposure in the workplace.
- Agencies are required to comply with electronic requirements outlined by the vendor.
- Agencies should screen staff daily prior to visiting clients – a screening questionnaire can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>

- When possible, agencies should dedicate staff to the lowest number of facilities possible to decrease the potential spread of COVID-19.
- Testing Symptomatic Employees
  - Anyone with symptoms should be tested immediately (see section on Antigen testing), not permitted to work, and isolate pending receipt of their test results.
- Reporting Positive Results
  - Home health and hospice providers must notify long-term care providers of any positive staff results within 4 hours.
  - Home health and hospice providers must report a a positive within 24 hours. Please see New Mexico Health Alert Network (HAN) dated 12/3/2020.
  - False Positive: Please go to:
    - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/hcp/nursing-home-testing-algorithm-508.pdf>
- Point-of-Care Rapid Antigen Tests
  - Some agencies may have procured machines and BinaxNOW rapid tests. The State of New Mexico directs agencies to use these antigen tests in the following circumstances only:
    - Symptomatic staff; and
    - Exposed staff (exposure is defined as close physical contact with a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual for 3 minutes or less, if the staff person was in full PPE this is not considered exposure).
    - Agencies should consult with the NM Department of Health if tests are used for additional circumstances, such as screening.

## COVID-19 VACCINATION

- Home health and hospice provider staff are healthcare professionals prioritized as “1a” in [New Mexico’s Vaccination Plan](#).
- Agencies must report to the Aging and Long-Term Services Department via Survey Monkey every Sunday by 8:00 pm regarding the total number of staff who have received vaccination. Agencies must also include the remaining number of staff to be vaccinated in these weekly updates.

Violation of this directive are subject to penalties set out in the Public Health Act, 24-1-21 NMSA 1978.