

FIRST RESPONDER/ EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES COVID-19 Testing Guidance



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First Responder/EMS COVID-19 TESTING

Tool Kit

Purpose of this Tool Kit

This tool kit is designed to assist First Responder/EMS agencies to stand up a COVID-19 testing site for their own workforce and other essential workers as designated by the municipality. While the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) does not regulate this process, this document will hopefully facilitate the process and direct agencies to the appropriate contacts within the Department of Public Health (DPH) to support compliant testing processes.

Contents

- DPH Guidance on Testing by EMS Professionals
- Specimen and Testing Resources
- Listing of Suggested Lab Partners
- Additional Resources
- Example Testing Plan (West Hartford)

COVID-19 Testing Guidance for First Responder/EMS Testing Programs

November 24, 2020

Introduction :

The purpose of this guidance is to establish the roles and procedures needed to initiate a COVID-19 testing program for First Responder/EMS agencies. Recognizing that proper use of PPE and social distancing are the first lines of defense, first responder testing should be considered for those who are (1) symptomatic, or (2) exposed without proper PPE or (3) living in red/orange towns as designated by DPH guidelines at a frequency of about every 30 days to reduce COVID spread.

First Responders Defined:

For the purpose of this testing program, First Responders are defined as active police, career and volunteer fire and emergency medical service personnel, and public safety

telecommunicators (i.e., dispatchers) (911/CMED call-takers). Municipalities may designate other essential workers as first responders such as public works employees.

Process:

The following guidelines are intended to assist an EMS agency looking to conduct specimen collection and/or testing for COVID-19.

- The OEMS does not regulate the collection of specimens or laboratory testing. Furthermore, collecting a specimen by swabbing is not within the scope of practice of EMS providers and should not be conducted in response to a 911 or similar call for service.
- Specimen collection (swabbing) for COVID-19 does not require a professional certification or license from the DPH. An individual who performs this skill is doing so as a designee of a laboratory or business entity. Any business entity, including an EMS agency, may establish a specimen collection program for employee testing.
- The entity collecting the specimen must collaborate with a DPH licensed clinical laboratory with a formal agreement to include provisions for the following:
 - Qualification of persons collecting specimens
 - Training of persons collecting specimens
 - Storage and transportation of specimens
 - Appropriate personal protective equipment
 - Physician program supervision
- The licensed clinical laboratory may be a hospital or private laboratory.
- If seeking to initiate a specimen collection process, please contact the DPH Facilities Licensing and Investigation Section (FLIS) for approval. Please email **BOTH** Anthony Bruno ([Anthony.M. Bruno@ct.gov](mailto:Anthony.M.Bruno@ct.gov)) and Kelly Mueller (Kelly.Mueller@ct.gov).
- If seeking to operate an in-house rapid COVID-19 testing system for symptomatic first responders, please contact the DPH FLIS for approval. Please email Liz Kronenberger (Elizabeth.Kronenberger@ct.gov).

Roles and Responsibilities:

All specimen collection entities will be responsible for:

- Following any guidance or operating procedures established by the CDC, state DPH, and/or local health authority

- The layout of the testing site, including whether the testing site will be set up as a walk-up, drive-through, hybrid of the two, or indoor location.

COVID-19 Test Collection and Laboratories

Identify a Provider: The First Responder/EMS agency may work with an existing local provider (i.e., urgent care doctor, primary care or other) or other appropriate partner to manage test collection and coordinate lab processing.

Identifying a Laboratory Partner: – The following labs have indicated an interest in contracting directly with First Responder/EMS agencies or municipalities to facilitate laboratory services. First Responder/EMS agencies may contact them directly or establish a partnership with another DPH approved lab or medical practice. Consideration should be provided to establishing a regional contract to maximize efficiency. Utilizing the state-contracted labs may ensure state-contracted pricing and turnaround time for PCR lab processing for First Responder/EMS personnel.

Labs will perform specimen processing and provide result notification to the ordering provider or designee.

1. Sema4

- a. Contact:** John Dougherty (john.Dougherty@sema4.com)
- b. Details:** Sema4 is able to organize asymptomatic testing schedules or contact tracing testing with first responder groups. They are able to charge insurance and if needed, they can provide a provider order.

2. Quest

- a. Contact:** Brett Huckle (Brett.J.Huckle@questdiagnostics.com) and Kim Pastore (Kimberly.A.Pastore@questdiagnostics.com)
- b. Details:** Quest is able to organize asymptomatic testing schedules or contact tracing testing with First responder groups. They are able to charge insurance and if needed, they can provide a provider order.

Costs:

First responder/EMS agencies will work with the vendor they select to arrange billing and insurance collection procedures.

In the event that insurance denies or partially pays a claim for COVID-19 testing, the municipality or appropriate employer of such first responder will be responsible for paying the vendor directly for its services. The municipality also bears financial responsibility for any uninsured testing of local volunteers under this program. Depending on the specific circumstances, and the eligibility requirements established by FEMA, the municipality will be able to file for 75% reimbursement of costs not covered by insurance.

Additional Resources

CDC Guidance on Testing of EMS Personnel

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>

FAQ On COVID Testing

<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Covid-19-Knowledge-Base/COVID-19-Testing>

NHTSA COVID Guidance

https://www.ems.gov/projects/coronavirus_covid-19_resources.html

DPH Interim Guidance for the use of Molecular Tests to Diagnose Adults and Children with Current Infection with SARS-CoV-2, the Virus that Causes COVID-19 (Updated 9-11-2020)

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/HAI/COVID-19-Testing-Recs_09112020.pdf