STAY SAFE MN

COVID-19 Testing Resources for Residential Programs Licensed by the Department of Human Services

Overview

In our state's ongoing effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in our communities, the Minnesota State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) has developed a variety of tools to help providers of Department of Human Services (DHS) licensed residential settings test their staff and the people they support to identify COVID-19 outbreaks early and mitigate the spread of the virus. DHS licensed residential settings include: adult foster care, chemical dependency residential treatment facilities, children's residential facilities, children's residential facilities with a mental health certification and/or chemical dependency certification, community residential settings, intermediate care facilities for intellectual and developmental disabilities, intensive residential treatment services, intensive treatment in foster care, mental health residential treatment facilities, and psychiatric residential treatment facilities.

The State of Minnesota strongly encourages everyone to have health insurance coverage for their own well-being. But for those who lack coverage, see information about how to obtain Free COVID-19 Testing (https://mn.gov/dhs/health-care-coverage/). Providers are encouraged to share this information with their staff and the people they support to ensure coverage is in place before testing is needed.

Clinics

The SEOC recommends that people who live in, work in, and visit DHS licensed residential settings get COVID-19 testing through their primary clinic if the setting has identified a positive COVID-19 case or if the individual has been exposed to COVID-19 (defined as being exposed, within 6 feet for 15 or more minutes, to a person with confirmed COVID-19). Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidance designates these people as a testing priority, so clinics with available tests should offer testing to these people and insurance carriers should cover the expense. MDH issued a Health Alert Notification in July 2020 to clarify this guidance: Health Advisory: New Testing Priorities for SARS-CoV-2 (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/2020/july30testing.pdf).

Typically, primary care clinics will be the quickest way to test people and notify them of results. Primary care clinics are also best situated to direct individualized care plans for their patients in the event of the positive diagnosis. Additionally, if a person uses their own primary care clinic, testing and any related services are more likely to be covered by insurance. Finally, when primary care clinics test individuals,

the SEOC will not have to provide the testing directly and can focus its resources on people and programs who may have difficulty accessing clinical testing.

Drive-thru clinics, community testing events, and convenience clinics associated with retail pharmacies may also be options, depending on a person's particular insurance coverage. Facilities may also choose to meet their testing needs by contracting with a private clinic or health care agency.

- Find Testing Locations (https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/get-tested.jsp)

- COVID-19 Community Testing (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/)

Alternatives to clinics

While clinics are a preferred method to get testing for most people, a clinic may not be a reasonable option for everyone for a variety of reasons. For example, clinical testing may be difficult for larger facilities hoping to test all staff and/or persons who use services, facilities that serve people who have difficulty with clinical settings due to their support needs, and geographical areas where clinics are not convenient.

These and other potential testing barriers may be best addressed through the options detailed below, and by requesting assistance from the SEOC to identify the testing method that best fits the facility's needs. Residential service providers may request SEOC assistance with testing resources requests for DHS facilities at Group Home COVID-19 Testing (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=A8NLELYMJP). Long-term care facilities can access testing support at COVID-19 Testing Requests and Allocations for Long Term Care (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=FXNEEE7PXX).

Self-testing

Residential service providers may be able to access self-testing kits. While some testing kits may be quite easy for a non-medical person to self-administer, others may require trained staff to administer the test. Providers should follow testing manufacturer guidelines for administering tests. Completed tests can then be sent to a lab for processing. Shipping methods for testing will vary based on the lab and the type of test kit used.

When facility staff are administering tests, the test should be performed in a resident's room or other designated space with the door closed. The staff in the room should wear a surgical face mask (or N95 respirator, if available), eye protection, gloves, and a gown. Only staff who are essential to collect the specimen should be present. After the specimen is collected, surfaces in the room should be cleaned and disinfected. Further information on specimen collection can be found at COVID-19 Testing in Group Homes: Frequently Asked Questions (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/groupfaq.pdf).

Residential service providers may individually contract with one of the many labs available through the private market to process test results. It may be advantageous to establish contracts in advance to

ensure timely access to supplies and processing when the need arises. The SEOC keeps a small store of kits that may be accessed by providers in response to COVID-19 outbreaks, but supply may be limited by demand. Requests for testing support, depending on the setting, may be made at:

- Group Home COVID-19 Testing (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=A8NLELYMJP)
- COVID-19 Testing Requests and Allocations for Long Term Care (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=FXNEEE7PXX)

Providers that do self-testing should also ensure that they are obtaining proper consent and handling test results and related information consistent with federal and state law, consulting with legal counsel as necessary.

On-site testing teams

On-site testing teams coordinated by SEOC may also be available to test people at a designated location or facility. Teams will work with providers to set up event times for collection and work with labs for processing. In some cases, those teams or the labs where they send specimens may also assist with insurance billing, notification of results, and other logistical details.

In times of high demand, on-site testing teams may be booked out for several days, so consolidating testing for multiple sites operated by the same residential service provider into a single event may be effective where possible.

Residential service providers may also individually contract in advance with agencies that provide these services to ensure access when the need arises. The SEOC can also assist in making referrals to these services in response to COVID-19 outbreaks.

Requests for testing support, depending on the setting, may be made at:

- Group Home COVID-19 Testing (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=A8NLELYMJP)
- COVID-19 Testing Requests and Allocations for Long Term Care (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=FXNEEE7PXX)

Additional resources

Guidance related to managing COVID-19 within congregate settings:

- COVID-19 Testing in Group Homes: Frequently Asked Questions (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/groupfaq.pdf)
- Interim Guidance on the Management of COVID-19 for Employees and Persons Who Use Services in Licensed Group Homes (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/groupmanage.pdf)

- [Interim Guidance on the Prevention of COVID-19 for Employees and Persons Who Use Services in Licensed Group Homes (PDF)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidegroup.pdf)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidegroup.pdf)

- [Questions and Answers for Staff, Families, and Clients of Children's Residential Facilities: COVID-19](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/faqcrf.html)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/faqcrf.html)