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| <p>Pre-Approval Requirement</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">***PREAPPROVAL REQUIRED***</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This document applies only for submissions to the DSHS <i>Austin</i> Laboratory. For information regarding submission to other Public Health Laboratories in Texas, contact your local health department via the process described below. • Contact your Regional and/or Local Health Department (https://www.dshs.texas.gov/regions/2019-nCoV-Local-Health-Entities/) and obtain Epidemiologist (Epi) approval to test. • Specimens WILL NOT be tested without prior Epidemiologist (Epi) approval. • All REQUIRED items on the G-2V submission form(s) must also be completed prior to testing. See additional details under “Specimen Shipping” section. |
| <p>Testing Criteria</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please refer to the guidance in the following link https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/ under “Information for: Public Health” on the right-hand panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DSHS COVID-19 Testing Algorithm ○ Evaluating and Testing Persons for COVID-19 (CDC) ○ DSHS COVID-19 Case Report Form <p>The decision to test a patient is appropriately made by the patient’s attending healthcare provider in consultation with public health. Specimens from individuals who meet CDC recommendations for testing will be prioritized based on resources. If resources at DSHS are at capacity, specimens meeting testing criteria may be forwarded to other public health laboratories or CDC for testing.</p> |
| <p>Specimen Types</p> | <p>To increase the likelihood of detecting infection, CDC recommends collecting and testing of Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs. Oropharyngeal (OP) swabs and Nasal swabs are also acceptable.</p> <p>IF an OP or Nasal swab is received instead of an NP swab, the OP or Nasal swab will be tested for SARS-CoV-2. If multiple specimens (e.g. NP Swab and OP Swab) are sent for SARS-CoV-2 testing, only a single swab will be tested based on the preferred specimen type (1. NP, 2. OP, 3. Nasal). Other specimens may be tested depending on laboratory resources.</p> <p>IF you have received an Epi approval to send additional specimen types (e.g. serum or plasma) to the DSHS Laboratory for COVID-19 Antibody testing, you must complete a separate G-2A form and follow the collection and submission instructions here.</p> |
| <p>Specimen Collection and Handling</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specimens should be collected as soon as possible after onset of illness, preferably within the first 3-4 days. Although some viruses may be detected after longer time periods, the likelihood of recovering most respiratory viruses diminishes after 3-4 days. • Maintain proper infection control when collecting specimens. Guidance can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/index.html#a4. • All specimens must be labeled with at least two patient specific identifiers (e.g. patient’s name [First and Last] and date of birth). The identifiers must appear on both the primary specimen container and the associated G-2V submission form. Please see the specimen identification guidelines at https://www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/mrs_specimens.shtm#Label for additional details and acceptable patient identifiers. • Make sure the patient's name and other approved identifiers on the form exactly match what is written on the specimen tube. • Each sample container must be labeled with the specimen type (Nasopharyngeal swab, etc.) if more than 1 specimen is submitted. |

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| <p>Specimen Collection and Handling (continued)</p> | <p><u>Upper respiratory tract</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect with an approved swab type using the appropriate collection technique. • Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing. • Collection Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nasopharyngeal swab: Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions. Swab both nasopharyngeal areas with the same swab. Place swab immediately into a sterile tube containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media. ○ Additional collection methods for other specimen types (OP swab, Nasal swab) may be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html. • If VTM is unavailable, Universal Transport Media (UTM), Amies, or 0.85% Saline may be substituted. <p>Refrigerate all specimens at 2-8°C promptly after collection and ship overnight to DSHS on ice packs. If specimens will not arrive to DSHS within 72 hours of collection, they should be stored frozen at -70°C and shipped on dry ice.</p> |
| <p>Specimen Shipping</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport specimens to the laboratory as soon as possible. • If shipping specimens through a courier, specimens may be shipped Monday-Thursday for receipt at the DSHS Laboratory Tuesday-Friday. Weekend delivery will be considered on a case by case basis and requires PRE-APPROVAL by DSHS. Please contact your Regional and/or Local Health Department to initiate the weekend approval process. • Complete a <i>DSHS G-2V Virology Specimen Submission Form</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A separate G-2V is required for each specimen (NP swab) submitted. ○ A submitter ID is required to submit specimens. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To request a submitter ID, please complete the <i>Submitter Identification (ID) Number Request Form</i> available at www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/MRS_forms.shtm#Microbiological and follow the instructions for submitting the form. ▪ Please include an email address in section 3 of the <i>Submitter ID Request Form</i> for a faster response. ○ Section 3 – Specimen Source or Type: select “Nasopharyngeal swab” or appropriate sample type. ○ Section 4 – Virology: select “COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) PCR” ○ Section 6 – Payor Source: mark “IDEAS” as the Payor Source • Please see sample G-2V submission form here. |
| <p>Specimen Shipping Continued</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place the G-2V form <i>and</i> DSHS COVID-19 Case Report Form on the outside of the Styrofoam container but inside the cardboard shipper. This will enable the laboratory to easily identify the specimens as COVID-19 specimens. • Follow international Air Transportation Regulations for shipping of Category “B” Biological Substances - Infectious Subs. brochure - PHMSA. • Specimens submitted without the proper DSHS G-2V form and/or without complete information may be delayed. • Ship to the physical address: TX DSHS Laboratory Services, ATTN: Walter Douglass 512-776-7569, 1100 W. 49th Street, Austin TX, 78756. • Record the shipping tracking number and notify your Regional and/or Local Health Department and DSHS that a specimen is being shipped. |

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| Results Reporting and Additional Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Per the DSHS COVID-19 Testing Algorithm, the Regional and/or Local Health Department will notify the healthcare facilities or personnel of test results.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The most current version of the DSHS COVID-19 Testing Algorithm may be found at https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/ under “Information for Public Health”.• Laboratory results will also be mailed to the submitter unless the submitter has requested to obtain reports via fax or online.• To obtain reports by fax, please use the Submitter Identification (ID) Number Request Form and follow the instructions to update your preferred method for delivery of test results.• To obtain reports online, please complete the Remote Data Services Facility Security Agreement and Remote Data Services User Agreement forms and follow the instructions. Email the request to remotelabsupport@dshs.texas.gov.• For other laboratory-related questions, please email LabInfo@dshs.texas.gov or call (512) 776-7578.• General information and updates about the ongoing COVID-19 Outbreak may be found here https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/ |
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