

Frequently Asked Questions

Please note that the directives given here are in regard to fulfilling your *state* reporting obligations to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). Be sure to reference your local health authority for any local reporting directives.

Registration

Q: I am already submitting COVID-19 results to my local health department. Do I still have to submit to DSHS?

A: Texas is a dual reporting state, so yes. You must follow local *and* state mandates for reporting.

Q: My facility is already submitting COVID-19 results to National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN). Do I still have to submit to DSHS?

A: If you are reporting your results to NHSN, you do not need to report to DSHS, as NHSN will report your results to the state.

Q: How do I start the process of submitting COVID-19 results to the state?

A: The first step is to **register** your organization to begin reporting.

Q: I have registered my facility, what next?

A: We will reach out to you with instructions for next steps after we receive your registration form and confirm that your CLIA is valid.

Q: Can I fax you my facility's results?

A: Texas DSHS accepts ONLY Electronic Lab Reporting (ELR), either via HL7 or in the DSHS approved CSV (comma separated value) file format. No other form of reporting is accepted at this time.

Q: Can I email DSHS my facility's results in a spreadsheet?

A: Since e-mail is not a secure method for protected health information (PHI) transfer, Texas DSHS will not accept reports via this method.

Q: My facility is doing point-of-care antigen tests. We are not a traditional lab facility. Do I still have to report test results to the state?

A: Yes. You are required to submit all COVID-19 test results to the state. Facility Onboarding User Guide will clarify how non-traditional facilities can register to report to the state.

Q: Can I phone/mail/fax in to DSHS my facility's COVID-19 results?

A: Texas DSHS DOES NOT does not accept phone, mailed, or faxed reports due to data security issues.

Testing

Q: I registered, submitted my IP, and connected successfully to the sFTP client. Can I start submitting test results?

A: Before we permit you to start sending reports, we first need you to submit a test file. This will help us acknowledge that the submission template guidelines and data dictionary were followed accordingly and successfully.

Q: How should test files be structured?

A: Test files MUST be a .csv file and records MUST resemble real data. Utilize the CSV template and enter test records in accordance with the data dictionary. Once test records are entered in the file, the file should be sent for testing using the correct file naming convention (Test_YourFacilityNameHere_CLIA#_DateofSubmission.csv).

Q: Am I only supposed to submit positive test results?

A: You are required to submit ALL test results, including positive, negative and indeterminates, to DSHS. Contact your local health authority for their requirements for reporting.

Q: What COVID-19 tests can I report to DSHS?

A: Results for all COVID-19 tests must be reported:

- Antigen
- PCR
- Antibody
- POC - Point of Care (can be antigen, PCR, or antibody)
- Panel tests that include COVID-19 tests (e.g., flu A + flu B + SARS CoV 2)

Q: How do I report panel tests?

A: If the panel test you are conducting tests for COVID-19, you should report **all** the results from that test. For example, if the panel tests for flu A, flu B, and SARS antigen, you would have to fill out three rows on the CSV file – one for each result. Each row should have the LOINC code corresponding to the test component. Do not use the LOINC order code when reporting panel tests.

Production

Q: What is LOINC? What LOINC code should I choose?

A: LOINC is a common language (set of identifiers, names, and codes) for identifying health measurements, observations, and documents. The **LOINC** website provides current codes for all reporting.

Q: What is a device identifier and where can I find it? Is it an important field to report?

A: The manufacturer and model of the device are adequate device identifiers. You can also use the model number or ID. It is a required field, and it is critical to helping epidemiologists conduct their case investigations.

Q: I don't know the value for a required field. What do I do?

A: See the data dictionary – for some fields, you can use values like Unknown, UN, or 99999, making sure that the values match the expected format of the field.

Q: Can I submit weekly reports instead of daily?

A: Reports **MUST** be submitted daily. Timely reporting is extremely important and necessary. If your facility is not open on a weekend or holiday, reports must be submitted on the next business day.

Q: I am a new staff member replacing someone else on the reporting team/The previous staff member is no longer responsible for reporting. What do I do?

A: Email your question to **COVID-19ELR@dshs.texas.gov** detailing your situation. Make sure to include your facility's CLIA number in the email. We can work to revise and/or correct our contact information for your facility.

Validation

Please refer to the data dictionary for all failed validations. All answers can be found in the data dictionary.

Q: Why are all my date fields causing errors?

A: .csv files accepted **ONLY** in MM/DD/YYYY format and must not have timestamps. If records are not reported in this format they **WILL** fail validation.

Q: My CSV looks fine in Excel with no data entry issues. Why is my file submission still failing?

A: Open the Excel file in Notepad and check for any extra commas at the end of each line, if there are any, then those represent extra columns. Remove the extra columns before resubmission.

Q: How do I report missing date of birth (DOB)?

A: If DOB is not known, it can be left blank. Filling with any other information like "Unknown" or "99" will cause failure. You can also leave age blank if DOB is unknown.