

California COVID-19 Testing Task Force

Overview

On April 4, Governor Newsom announced the launch of California's COVID-19 Testing Task Force (TTF), with the mission of coordinating public and private sector efforts to significantly increase access to testing across California. The Task Force, co-chaired by Charity Dean, M.D., Assistant Director of the California Department of Public Health and Paul Markovich, CEO of Blue Shield of California, is working to develop and implement a strategy to increase testing fivefold by the end of April and beyond.

The goals of the Testing Task Force include:

- Ensuring California has lab capacity to rapidly turn around test results and increase capacity strategically to meet demand;
- Improving the supply chain to ensure that California can both collect samples and evaluate results without delay;
- Enabling new, high-quality tests to launch in California as soon as possible;
- Improving our ability to accurately track and evaluate COVID-19 testing capacity, results and reporting; and
- Building the workforce necessary to meet our testing goals.

Distributing Limited Specimen Collection Supplies

The Testing Task force recognizes that scarce specimen collection supplies remain a major barrier to increase COVID-19 testing volumes in California. We are making progress to secure these supplies (e.g., swabs and viral transport medium) from multiple manufacturers, including several California companies.

While the state expects to significantly increase available supplies, specimen collection supplies will remain insufficient in the near term to fully address needs across all types of healthcare facilities and populations. By leveraging the existing infrastructure of the Medical and Health Coordination Center (MHCC), the state can streamline ordering and distribution, ensure equitable availability, and track ongoing and changing demand for supplies over time.

In order to protect California's most vulnerable and at-risk population, allocation of specimen collection supplies will be based on the following principles:

- **California will use a consistent approach to prioritize testing needs** across the state, with hospitalized patients, people who live in congregate settings, and specific high-risk populations (e.g., healthcare workers) remaining top priority for COVID-19 testing.

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- **MHOACs have first-hand understanding of local needs and are best positioned to allocate limited supplies within their operating areas.**

Role of the Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator

The state intends to use existing Medical and Health Operational Area Coordination (MHOAC) Program infrastructure to equitably distribute limited sample collection supplies across the state. With this model in place, MHOAC programs will:

- Continue submitting resource requests to the MHCC via the Regional Disaster Medical Health Coordinator (RDMHC) Programs following the regular Public Health and Medical process.
- Promptly distribute supplies to sites of care. The state is committed to promptly distributing all available supplies to operational areas.
- Provide the Testing Taskforce with necessary data reporting to inform supply distribution decisions (for example, weekly information about supplies on hand and supplies distributed by the MHOAC programs).

The state and the Testing Taskforce are looking for feedback from operational areas and will adjust the distribution model on an ongoing basis.

Questions?

Please reach out to testing.taskforce@state.ca.gov if you have any questions about collection supplies distribution or testing guidelines for hospitals and other healthcare facilities in California.