

California COVID-19 Testing Task Force

California COVID-19 Testing Task Force Newsletter

April 24, 2020

On April 4, Governor Gavin Newsom [announced the launch](#) of California's COVID-19 Testing Task Force, 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 five-fold.

In line with the six key indicators Governor Newsom has outlined to guide California's thinking for when and how to modify the stay-at-home and other orders during the COVID-19 pandemic, 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.

The Testing Task Force has been working to meet the goals outlined above and is pleased to provide updates about the incredible progress being done on testing in California.

Testing Guidance

Earlier this week, the California Department of Public Health [issued new guidelines](#) for testing. The new guidance is divided into four categories:

- Priority 1: Hospitalized patients, symptomatic healthcare workers, persons identified for testing by public health contact investigations and disease control activities in high risk settings, including both residents and staff, e.g., congregate living facilities, correctional facilities
- Priority 2: Screening of asymptomatic residents of congregate living facilities prior to admission or re-admission to congregate living facility, screening of asymptomatic healthcare workers (skilled nursing facility workers, hospital workers), symptomatic persons in essential health and public safety occupations
- Priority 3: Symptomatic persons in essential infrastructure occupations (utility workers, food supply workers, other public employees).

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- Priority 4: Community-based testing of all low-risk symptomatic persons, surveillance testing of asymptomatic persons

Testing Supplies

On April 24, the testing supply workgroup distributed [Supply Distribution Guidelines](#) to both stakeholders and Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator (MHOAC) Programs across the state. The information has been posted to the Testing Task Force website and lays out the distribution model for COVID-19 testing supplies.

While the state expects a significant increase in available supply volumes, 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, the state can streamline ordering and distribution, ensure equitable availability, and track ongoing and changing demand for supplies over time.

Also announced this week was guidance on usage of [alternative swabs](#) for testing, including more information included in the [FDA FAQs](#).

Testing Sites

California and the COVID-19 Testing Task Force have joined together with OptumServe, the federal government health services business of Optum, in a partnership to expand community testing sites statewide for underserved and vulnerable Californians. At maximum capacity, OptumServe will be able to support up to 80 testing sites at one time throughout the state, increasing testing capacity by more than 10,500 tests per day. The announcement is included in Governor Newsom's April 22 [press release](#). OptumServe has extensive expertise in rapidly deploying and setting up health care services and has worked closely with the military under the leadership of former Army Surgeon General and retired Lieutenant General Patty Horoho, RN.

Testing Options

On April 17, the Testing Task Force provided guidance on serology testing options to public health labs currently testing for COVID-19, as well as to stakeholders. Guidance is available on the [Testing Task Force website](#).

Test Processing

On April 14, the California Department of Public Health announced that 14 Abbott ID NOW machines were distributed throughout the state and to the following counties:

- Humboldt County
- Butte County
- Monterey County
- Riverside County
- Santa Barbara
- Shasta County

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- Kern County
- Tulare County
- Ventura County
- Alameda County
- Imperial County
- Inyo

In addition, the Testing Task Force, in collaboration with the state, has purchased 250,000 Abbott M2000 PCR test kits. These test kits, compatible with the Abbott M2000 high-throughput machine, are available to laboratories statewide to help meet the growing demand for testing in California.

More Information

Please feel free to distribute this information through your own communication channels and visit <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/> for additional resources. For specific questions, please email testing.taskforce@state.ca.gov.