



**To: Home Health and Hospice Agencies**  
**From: New Mexico Department of Health**  
**Date: December 23, 2020**  
**Re: Letter of Direction**

---

The Division on Health Improvement provides the following direction with respect to testing and vaccination activities related to COVID-19:

#### TESTING

- To maximize the expediency of test result turnaround times, home health and hospice agencies are directed to immediately utilize the laboratory resource designated by the Department of Health - Curative. Facilities may not utilize a different laboratory.
- Home health and hospice employers must ensure all employees are tested regularly at least once per month for screening of COVID-19.
  - All staff, regardless of whether they go into personal homes or into long-term care facilities to provide care are included in this requirement.
  - The frequency of testing may increase pending a positive employee in the workplace and/or need for rapid response following an exposure in the workplace.
- Anyone with symptoms should be tested immediately, not permitted to work, and isolate pending receipt of their test results.
- Agencies are required to comply with electronic requirements outlined by the vendor.
- Home health and hospice employers must provide written documentation of monthly testing compliance to all long-term care facilities which receive the agencies services.
- Agencies should screen staff daily prior to visiting clients – a screening questionnaire can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>
- Home health and hospice providers must notify long-term care providers of any positive staff results within 4 hours.
- When possible, agencies should dedicate staff to the lowest number of facilities possible to decrease the potential spread of COVID-19.

- Point-of-Care Rapid Antigen Tests
  - Some agencies may have procured machines and BinaxNOW rapid tests. The State of New Mexico directs agencies to use these antigen tests in the following circumstances only:
    - Symptomatic staff; and
    - Exposed staff (exposure is defined as close physical contact with a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual for 3 minutes or less, if the staff person was in full PPE this is not considered exposure).
    - Agencies should consult with the NM Department of Health if tests are used for additional circumstances, such as screening.
  - All results, whether positive or negative must be reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) per §483.80(g)(1) and (2) with 24 hours of receiving the result.

## COVID-19 VACCINATION

- Home health and hospice provider staff are healthcare professionals prioritized as “1a” in [New Mexico’s Vaccination Plan](#).
- Agencies must report to the Aging and Long-Term Services Department on a monthly basis regarding the total number of staff who have received vaccination. Agencies must also include the remaining number of staff to be vaccinated in these monthly updates.

Failure to follow these directives may result in citation, civil monetary penalty, or license revocation pursuant to the [New Mexico Administrative Code](#) and all applicable regulations to home health and hospice agencies.