



CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

PAUL M. WENDEL, JR.
County Executive

CHRISTINE SCHUYLER
*Director of Health & Human Services
(Commissioner of Social Services/Public Health Director)*

MEMO

TO: Health Care Providers, Hospitals, Diagnostic and Treatment Centers, Urgent Care Centers
FROM: Christine Schuyler, BSN, RN, MHA
DATE: March 17, 2020
RE: Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Specimen Collection and Testing

It is no longer necessary for a health care provider (HCP) in any setting to obtain the approval of the Local Health Department (LHD) to test a patient who they feel needs COVID-19 testing. Considering the nationwide shortage of testing supplies and PPE and the inevitability of community spread, I ask that each HCP be cognizant of the CDC guidelines, Evaluating and Testing Persons for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>).

Provider offices, hospitals, diagnostic and treatment centers, and urgent care centers now have the option to collect a specimen for COVID-19 on site and submit to a commercial lab (such as ACL/Quest, LabCorp) or the Erie County Public Health Lab. The Erie County Public Health Lab will only test for COVID-19 – no other respiratory pathogens. Specimen transport arrangements to the Erie County Public Health must be made through this Health Department.

While testing approval is no longer required, the HCP is to email cchealth@co.chautauqua.ny.us with HCP contact information and patient information: name, date of birth, address, phone number, date of testing, and what lab the specimen was sent to for analysis. This notification at the time of specimen collection is to ensure appropriate education on isolation precautions is provided to the patient. The patient should isolate themselves in their home and away from other household members who should also isolate until results are known. Public Health staff will follow-up with the patient. HCP's should continue to do medical assessments on their patients prior to seeking COVID-19 testing, this may be via phone, telemedicine or in person.

If a HCP does not have the proper PPE to perform COVID-19 testing in the office, please do not send patients to an Emergency Room for specimen collection. Only in the case of severe symptoms should ER's be used for patient assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

As of March 18, 2020, the Federally Qualified Health Center, The Chautauqua Center (TCC) locations in Jamestown and Dunkirk will collect respiratory specimens, including COVID-19, as a nursing visit for patients outside of their practice. TCC requests that health care providers contact them directly and the patient must have an order for the testing. To arrange for specimen collection at TCC, please call 716-294-3985. Do not send patients to TCC without calling staff and making arrangements.

If a patient does not have a primary care provider, he/she can be referred to TCC. To make such a referral, call 716-294-3985. I am very grateful for the partnership and services of TCC.

We are attempting to obtain supplies at the Health Department so that our public health nurses can also collect specimens in our Public Health clinic in Mayville or in a patient's home if necessary. Health Department staff will continue to update you as this situation evolves and further testing options and supplies become available. Thank you!