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Note: Contact information for the Alaska Section of Epidemiology can be found at the end of this message.

Alaska Public Health Alert

Updated Criteria for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Persons Under Investigation (PUI) Reporting and Testing in Alaska

March 4, 2020

Summary

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated criteria for considering Persons Under Investigation (PUI) on March 4, 2020 that expands testing to a wider group of symptomatic patients. However, testing capacity at public health laboratories across the country, including in Alaska, is still very limited. At the time of release of this PHAN message, the Alaska State Public Health Laboratories (ASPHL) have enough supplies to test fewer than 150 people. ASPHL expects to receive supplies tomorrow to test an additional 50 people. No additional test kits are currently scheduled to be shipped from CDC to Alaska after tomorrow. Therefore, until additional capacity becomes available, COVID-19 testing will need to be prioritized for certain patients. The intent of this brief message is to alert health care providers to the new CDC guidance, and also make clear the reality of in-state testing capacity. As soon as conditions change, we will disseminate further guidance.

Reporting

Health care providers should continue to contact the Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) at 907-269-8000, or 800-478-0084 after-hours to report Persons Under Investigation (PUI) as defined in the Alaska-specific guidance dated March 4, 2020 (available [here](#)).

Testing Prioritization

Until additional laboratory supplies are available from CDC, patients who meet the criteria below will be considered the highest priority for testing.

- The patient has a [clinically compatible illness](#) AND
 - Close contact to a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19
 - OR a history of travel within the past 14 days to an [affected geographic area](#) (e.g., the patient just returned from Northern Italy a week ago or Kirkland, WA 3 days ago) without an alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza).
- OR the patient has fever + severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without an alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza).
- All others will need to be considered in consultation with SOE on a case-by-case basis.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, please check the SOE's [COVID-19 website](#) often for updates.

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