



ADPH Updates Testing Criteria



Due to dwindling testing supplies, the Alabama Department of Public Health has been forced to revise its testing criteria. Previously, ADPH approved testing simply based on a physician's order; however, it has become necessary for the department to institute new testing criteria.

Persons with no symptoms should not be tested. Testing is also not recommended for persons with mild symptoms. Please direct patients to stay home, practice home care, and call if symptoms worsen. All persons are asked to practice social distancing and to limit social interactions.

All providers requesting COVID-19 testing must complete the online Novel Coronavirus PUI form found on the [ADPH Coronavirus for Healthcare Providers webpage](#). Providers should select the category of the laboratory where the specimen will be sent for testing: Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL), commercial, or clinical laboratory on the form. An email confirming successful submission of the form will be sent. If BCL is selected, the email will include confirmation or declination of approval for testing. Once approved, the email includes a link to the BCL requisition form which must accompany the specimen.

[Follow specimen collection and shipping instructions carefully.](#)

The Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) provides free access to the BCL Web Portal. The BCL Web Portal is an electronic system for ordering and receiving laboratory test results. BCL recommends all providers use its Web Portal to assist submitting all test requisitions and for receiving all test results in a timely manner. To register for a Web Portal account, using your work email address, **[please email us the following information:](#)**

- Facility name

- Facility address
- Facility phone number
- Point of contact

The following testing criteria is now in place pursuant to the March 23 health order:

- The patient is symptomatic with at minimum (measured or subjective fever OR cough OR shortness of breath, **AND**
- The patient is hospitalized, or
- The patient is immunocompromised or has co-morbidities, or
- The patient age 65 years or older, or
- The patient is a healthcare worker, or
- The patient is associated with a long-term healthcare facility

[Click here for the most current testing information.](#)

CMS Announces Relief for Clinicians, Providers, Hospitals and Facilities Participating in Quality Reporting Programs in Response to COVID-19



Yesterday, CMS announced it is granting exceptions from reporting requirements and extensions for clinicians and providers participating in Medicare quality reporting programs with respect to upcoming measure reporting and data submission for those programs. The action comes as part of the Trump Administration's response to 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Most importantly for physicians:

- The Quality Payment Program Deadline is extended from March 31, 2020 to April 30, 2020.
- MIPS eligible clinicians who have not submitted any MIPS data by April 30, 2020 will qualify for the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy and will receive a neutral payment adjustment for the 2021 MIPS payment year.
- CMS is evaluating options for providing relief around participation and data submission for 2020.

[To read about more extensions, click here.](#)

AMA, AHA, ANA Letter to President Trump



Saturday afternoon, the American Medical Association, American Hospital Association and the American Nurses Association sent President Trump a letter urging him to use the DPA to increase the domestic production of medical supplies and equipment that hospitals, health systems, physicians, nurses, and all front line providers so desperately need.

[Read the letter here.](#)

BCBS Allows Flexibility on Prior Authorization of Procedures

During the term of the declared emergency, BCBS will allow a provider to reschedule a patient who is certified for a procedure on a particular date, to a new date, without receiving another prior authorization for the new date, as long as the procedure is completed within a year. The provider needs to notify BCBS of the new date.



U.S. Small Business Administration

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

[Read more...](#)



Want to learn more about COVID-19?

The American Medical Association reviews the answers to ten of the most frequently asked questions about the disease.

[Read more...](#)

Palmetto GBA (Medicare) Telehealth Expansion: Billing and Coverage Webcast



Physicians are invited to join Palmetto GBA for a webcast to review the coverage

and billing guidelines available for Medicare Fee-for-Services Emergency-Related Telehealth Policy and Procedures.

This webcast is scheduled on Tuesday, March 24, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. CT

During this webcast, Palmetto GBA (the Medicare Contractor) will share the latest available information regarding Medicare Telehealth coverage specifically related to the COVID-19 outbreak as well as providing CMS billing instructions for these services.

[Click here](#) to see Palmetto's webinar hosted March 19, 2020 regarding telehealth expansion.

[Register Here](#)

ALBME and MLC Institute Emergency Medical Licensing Procedures

The Alabama Board of Medical Examiners and the Medical Licensure Commission have adopted emergency administrative rules and procedures allowing for the emergency licensing of qualified medical personnel. [See the full alert here.](#)

Ask CMS to Cover Telephone-Only Visits for Seniors

The increased use of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical to maintain as much access to care as possible for patients while appropriately practicing social distancing. At present, CMS's current telehealth policy for Medicare patients falls far short of achieving these goals by not allowing telephone-only visits for Alabama seniors.

[Do your part and contact CMS, the President and Vice President, and Congress today.](#)



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