

ForwardHealth **UPDATE**

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ENSURING APPROPRIATE COVID-19 TESTING

Testing to determine who has COVID-19 is crucial to Wisconsin's efforts to protect those at highest risk of infection and prevent the spread of the disease. Based on the [State of Wisconsin Testing Framework](#), P-02709 (06/2020), ForwardHealth expects providers to follow guidance described below and order tests as indicated to support state disease containment strategies.

The State of Wisconsin Testing Framework criteria described below prioritizes testing by focusing on those most likely to have COVID-19, those without symptoms who may be spreading the disease unknowingly, and those most vulnerable if they contract the disease. Providers play a critical role in operationalizing these strategies.

This ForwardHealth Update discusses diagnostic testing for COVID-19. Antibody testing is not addressed. For the latest information from ForwardHealth regarding COVID-19, refer to the [COVID-19 ForwardHealth News and Resources page](#) on the ForwardHealth Portal.

AFFECTED PROGRAMS

BadgerCare Plus, Medicaid

TO

All Providers, HMOs and Other
Managed Care Programs

The information provided in this ForwardHealth Update is published in accordance with Wis. Stat. § 49.0001.

Reducing Barriers for Disproportionately Affected Populations

Planning and delivering equitable testing requires careful consideration of groups that may be disproportionately affected by COVID-19 or who are at a higher risk for more severe outcomes from the virus. ForwardHealth members may fall into these categories. ForwardHealth expects providers to order COVID-19 testing and provide follow-up care, as described in this Update, with special attention to the following populations:

- People of color
- People living with physical disabilities
- People experiencing homelessness
- People who are working without documentation
- People who are refugees
- People with medically complex health conditions
- People who experience cultural or linguistic disadvantages
- People and families with low incomes
- People with functional and access needs (for example, transportation, information, proximity to resources)
- People with limited access to and/or trust in health care services
- People who are older than 65 years old

Testing for Symptomatic People

Providers should order tests for individuals who show symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19. This includes people who have recently developed **any one or more** of the following symptoms, even if these symptoms are mild:

- Fever, defined as a measured temperature greater than 100.4 °F
- Subjective fever; for example, if a person feels unusually warm to the touch or reports sensations similar to previous experiences of fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Chills or rigors (repetitive shaking chills)
- Myalgia (muscle aches)
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Nasal congestion or runny nose

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Testing for Asymptomatic People

Individuals may have COVID-19 without showing symptoms of the infection and may spread the illness unknowingly. Providers should order COVID-19 diagnostic tests for three types of asymptomatic people:

- People who have been in close contact with a person with COVID-19, regardless of symptoms
- People who have been instructed by a public health agency to get a COVID-19 test, regardless of symptoms, as part of an outbreak investigation in a community
- People who have been instructed by a health care provider to get a COVID-19 test, regardless of symptoms, for the purpose of infection control to inform return-to-work decisions, assess workers employed in health care settings, or screen individuals prior to aerosol-generating procedures

COVID-19 Codes and Billing

Information about Current Procedural Terminology and Healthcare Common Procedural Coding System procedure codes related to COVID-19 can be found in the March 2020 ForwardHealth Alert [001](#) titled “ForwardHealth Accepted Procedure Codes From Eligible Providers Who Test Patients for COVID-19.” As a reminder, members should not be charged copays for any COVID-19-related care, including testing, consistent with the June 2020 Update (2020-26), titled “[Member Copay Exemption for COVID-19 Laboratory Testing, Laboratory Testing-Related Services, and All COVID-19-Related Treatment Services.](#)”

COVID-19 Reporting

COVID-19 is a Category I disease and is considered to have significant public health impact. [Any confirmed or suspected cases must be reported immediately](#) to the patient’s local health officer or their designee and electronically through the [Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System \(WEDSS\)](#). WEDSS is a secure, web-based system designed to facilitate reporting, investigation, and surveillance of communicable diseases in Wisconsin. This makes it possible to conduct timely contact tracing after identifying a positive test.

By submitting data to WEDSS, health care providers can also access their patients’ COVID-19 test results using the report available in the state’s [Public](#)

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[Health Analysis Visualization and Reporting \(PHAVR\) web portal](#). Results may also be available through interoperability mechanisms in the electronic health record. Health care providers are encouraged to contact their electronic health record vendor for interoperability instructions.

For More Information

For more information about DHS's testing goals, testing capacity, and other testing-related resources, refer to the [State of Wisconsin Testing Framework](#).

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The ForwardHealth Update is the first source of program policy and billing information for providers.

Wisconsin Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, SeniorCare, and Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program are administered by the Division of Medicaid Services within the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). The Wisconsin AIDS Drug Assistance Program and the Wisconsin Well Woman Program are administered by the Division of Public Health within DHS.

For questions, call Provider Services at 800-947-9627 or visit our website at www.forwardhealth.wi.gov/.