



Sentinel Surveillance Testing for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nursing Homes

Sentinel surveillance – or testing randomly within a facility can help monitor the epidemiology of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and ensures any new infections in nursing homes are detected promptly, and their contacts traced to contain transmission as early as possible.

Sentinel surveillance in nursing homes involves testing a certain number of residents and Healthcare Personnel (HCP) each week in each nursing home across the state, including those individuals who are apparently well, in order to discover unseen transmission. South Dakota Department of Health recommends all nursing homes test 2 staff and 1 resident from their Asymptomatic Resident and HCP populations each week.

Sentinel surveillance testing should not be performed if the facility is currently performing facility wide testing or conducting Point Prevalence Survey (PPS) testing. If facilities are performing facility wide testing or PPS testing, sentinel surveillance testing can be paused, and resumed once those larger testing events are complete.

Steps to Perform SARS-CoV-2 Sentinel Surveillance Testing in Nursing Homes

1. Ensure your facility has appropriate quantity of PPE available to perform testing following CDC guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>).
 - a. PPE can be requested from the State of South Dakota using the following link ([SD DOH PPE REQUEST](#))
2. Ensure employees fit-tested for N95 respirators, or a higher-level respirator are available to perform specimen collection at your facility.
 - a. Obtain fit-testing for staff using your community resources (local hospital, hospital occupational health programs, EMS, Fire Department, etc.).
 - b. If fit-testing is not available from community resources, e-mail: DOHSafety@state.sd.us with your fit-testing request. The SD DOH will make every attempt to facilitate request.
 - c. Facilities that do not have N-95 respirators or fit-tested employees may attempt to obtain/borrow powered air-purifying respirators (PAPRs) to use for the testing event from a local healthcare partner.
 - d. If reusable respirators (e.g., powered air-purifying respirators [PAPRs]) are used, they must be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's reprocessing instructions prior to re-use.

3. Nursing Homes should test 2 staff and 1 resident from their asymptomatic resident and HCP populations each week.
4. The South Dakota Public Health Lab (SDPHL) will provide specimen collection kits, shipping materials, and laboratory testing on these specimens
 - a. Facilities should follow the SDPHL laboratory guidance on what swabs the laboratory is validated to test (Nasopharyngeal (NP) or nasal).
 - b. Obtain collection, shipping supplies, and laboratory requisitions from the SDPHL
 - c. SDPHL will provide specimen collection and shipping requirements, as well as proper documentation.
5. Orders for testing will have to come from the facility medical director, or a patient's physician. Standing orders, or individual orders are appropriate.
6. Collect swabs for SARS-CoV-2 following the appropriate laboratory and CDC infection control guidance, as well as in consultation with your facility or system level infection control staff.
 - a. [Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Persons for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
 - b. [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Healthcare Settings](#)
 - c. [Using Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
 - d. [Specimen collection instructional video](#) (NETEC)
 - e. [Specimen collection infographic](#) (NETEC)
7. Send specimens to the SDPHL laboratory following all shipping and handling requirements.
 - a. If you need assistance, contact the South Dakota Public Health Lab
8. South Dakota Department of Health is available to provide support and consultation during this process.

Frequently Asked Questions

Current data shows older adults and those living in congregate environments such as nursing homes and assisted living centers are some of the most vulnerable population for severe disease from COVID-19.

Sentinel surveillance testing of at-risk populations ensures any new infections in nursing homes are detected promptly, and their contacts traced to contain transmission as early as possible.

1. **Is Sentinel Surveillance testing mandatory?** Sentinel surveillance testing should be used as one component in a facility's Infection Prevention and Control program. Sentinel testing is required for all nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Assisted living Centers are encouraged to participate with sentinel testing.
2. **Do I need a medical order?** Yes, a medical order (individual or standing) is required.
3. **Is a consent form required?** Yes, consent is required for all residents, or their authorized representative, and staff tested.

4. **Who is going to collect the specimens?** Specimen collection should be performed by facility staff. Nursing homes should work in partnership with a provider, local hospital or clinic to assist with the collection of specimens if needed.
5. **Where do I get lab supplies?** The facility will be provided with testing supplies from the South Dakota Public Health Laboratory by requesting COVID-19 collection kits under the miscellaneous section. <https://www.state.sd.us/eforms/secure/eforms/E1820V6-OrdersFormLab-SK05.pdf>
6. **How do I order PPE?** If you are unable to order supplies through your normal supply system, you may request PPE from the Department of Health using the PPE request form. Request forms should be emailed to COVIDResourceRequests@state.sd.us, faxed to 605.773.5942, or called in to 605.773.3048.7. **How can I get staff fit-tested?** Staff must be fit-tested prior to wearing a N-95 respirator. If you need staff fit-tested, contact your health care system or local hospital. If you are unable to have staff fit-tested, facilities may choose to contact their local healthcare partners (acute care hospital, EMS, etc) to inquire about borrowing a Powered Air Purifier Respirator (PAPR) short term for the testing event. If fit-testing is not available from community resources, e-mail: DOHSafety@state.sd.us with your fit-testing requests. The SD DOH will make every attempt to facilitate request. Staff training is required for use of any PPE.
7. **How is testing being paid for?** Federal funds are available through the state to pay for the processing of the specimen, laboratory supplies, and PPE. The facility is responsible for collecting the specimens.
8. **How can I get payment for collecting specimens?** Reimbursement of specimen collection may be billed to Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance.
9. **How do facilities determine who to test each week?** The provider should randomly select asymptomatic 2 staff and 1 asymptomatic resident each week. Do not repeat tests on an individual that has tested positive for COVID-19 in a previous PPS or weekly sample.