



**Idaho Bureau of Laboratories (IBL) Testing Update for Idaho Public Health Districts and Idaho Long-Term Care Facilities  
May 26, 2020**

Residents of long-term care facilities are at high risk of serious complications, including death, from COVID-19. Introduction of SARS-CoV-2 by either symptomatic or asymptomatic infected persons can result in rapid spread of the virus among residents and staff of long-term care facilities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued [recommendations](#) for broader reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing in facilities with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, including testing of all residents and staff, regardless of symptoms, if testing capacity allows. Repeat testing in certain circumstances is also recommended.

In addition, CMS has issued [recommendations](#) for state and local officials to help determine the level of mitigation needed to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in nursing homes as certain restrictions are relaxed; these recommendations include the capacity to test all residents and staff rapidly at baseline and again in certain circumstances.

CMS also recommends that an arrangement be in place with laboratories to process these tests.

The Idaho Bureau of Laboratories (IBL) currently has capacity to accept an increased volume of specimens from long-term care facilities to help support this national testing guidance.

Specifically, IBL can accept specimens for:

- Symptomatic residents or staff members in a long-term care facility
- New resident admissions to long-term care facilities
- All staff members, regardless of symptoms, in long-term care facilities with one or more newly confirmed cases of COVID-19; asymptomatic residents may be tested also if IBL capacity allows

IBL cannot support routine (e.g., weekly) testing of staff for surveillance purposes; an arrangement with commercial laboratories should be initiated in order to procure this service.

Long-term care facilities should be in contact their local public health district (PHD) about testing at IBL, and the PHD can help the facility obtain swabs and viral transport media, if needed. IBL does not charge facilities for the testing.

If a large number of specimens is anticipated, such as testing of all staff members or all residents in a facility, IBL should be contacted, and this testing should be discussed, before these specimens are collected and submitted for processing at IBL.