

Session 6: COVID-19 Testing for Nursing Homes

Key Takeaways:

- Know the purpose for and differences among types of COVID-19 tests in nursing homes (e.g., antigen/molecular/viral tests vs antibody/serologic tests); diagnostic vs serial tests, testing in response to an outbreak, etc.
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fclinical-criteria.html (see sections on nursing home workers and residents).
- Ensure that the center has written policies and procedures for how to obtain current CDC, CMS and state department of public health/local boards of health recommendations on testing, including immediate response to an outbreak.

Being visible on the units during the pandemic promotes teams' accountability to identify and manage risks, understand testing that may help to limit COVID-19 spread. The following question set can be used to facilitate discussions and reveal opportunities across and within key members of interprofessional teams, residents and visitors. Please consider using/adapting them in your next huddles or team meetings.

Questions by Content

Integrate testing protocols into overall infection prevention and management plan	Who is responsible for implementing testing protocols for residents and staff (e.g., infection preventionist or appropriately trained designee)? How frequently is the plan reviewed and updated? If the IP is not available, who else has access to the testing protocols (e.g., on off shifts or weekends)? Is there an external consultant - local or national infectious disease expert - who is available (part of the center's network or contracted) to respond to questions about COVID-19 testing in the center?
Reporting Test Results	Who is the person accountable for appropriately reporting test results (sharing with all relevant center staff, reporting positive COVID-19 cases to the state department of public health/local boards of health)?
Follow-Up Plan (monitoring over time)	Is there a COVID-19 Team or Task Force that reviews test results, actions taken, documentation on a regular basis? Are updates/changes to processes and systems made in a timely manner?
Improvement Concepts	Are residents and care partners/family members asked about receiving regular communication on testing and test results? Do they have any recommendations for improvement? Are there daily huddles or stand-up meetings specific to COVID-19, including testing protocols?

Critical Questions for Leadership

	Is there evidence that the IP or appropriately trained designee is following center protocols for routine and diagnostic testing? Do all relevant staff state that they have a basic understanding of testing protocols and procedures?
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Key Concepts by Stakeholder Group

What do Medical Directors Need to know and discuss with the team?	Medical directors must have current knowledge related to CDC, CMS and state department of public health recommendations for COVID-19 testing in nursing homes, including diagnostic, serial (routine based on county positivity rates) and testing related to an outbreak. Medical directors must meet or speak regularly with DON, Administrator and the center's COVID-19 Team or Task Force.
What do DONs and nursing supervisors need to know?	DONs must have contact information for individuals at the state department of public health who can answer questions about COVID-19 testing in nursing homes in that state. DONs must have a system for assessing and monitoring staff knowledge and skills related to identifying anyone at increased risk for COVID-19, anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, and immediate actions to take (including testing, possible resident re-location, and need for staff to leave the center until test results are back).
What does the interprofessional team need to know?	Staff must know how to recognize potential signs/symptoms of COVID-19 and how to report and document (to whom and how soon). Teams must demonstrate open, frequent, supportive communication across and within departments and between point-of-care (direct care) workers and leadership/administration. Team members (all departments) must be able to articulate and describe immediate actions to take if a new or suspected new case of COVID-19 is identified. Team members must consistently and reliably demonstrate that they document and report any concerns that might require COVID-19 testing to their supervisor or leadership.