

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

URGENT HEALTH BULLETIN

COVID-19 Electronic Laboratory Reporting Disruption; New Online Patient Form

This document contains hyperlinks and can be accessed on our [Health Bulletin webpage](https://kernpublichealth.com/health-bulletin/) (<https://kernpublichealth.com/health-bulletin/>) or on the [COVID-19 webpage](https://kernpublichealth.com/2019-novel-coronavirus/) (<https://kernpublichealth.com/2019-novel-coronavirus/>)

August 6, 2020

Dear Kern County Healthcare Provider:

- **Underreporting of COVID-19 Cases due to Electronic Laboratory Reporting Issue**
On August 4, 2020, California Department of Public Health notified [laboratories of an ongoing issue with routing of electronic laboratory reporting \(ELR\) submissions](#). This does not affect the timeliness of reports being received by healthcare providers. It does, however, cause a significant delay in laboratory results being received by the Kern County Public Health Services Department (KCPHSD). This impacts KCPHSD's ability to conduct case investigations and contact tracing. State resources have been allocated to resolving this issue. In the interim:
 - **Laboratories** should continue to send all laboratory reports via
 - Fax to 661-868-0261 or
 - Secure email to KCDPHLab@kerncounty.com. A test email is always recommended prior to sending a protected health information through secure email.
 - **Healthcare providers** should continue to send [COVID-19 confidential morbidity reports](#) (CMR) and a copy of the positive laboratory report via
 - Fax to 661-868-0261
 - CalREDIE Provider Portal. Please ensure that a copy laboratory result is uploaded and attached to the WebCMR. CalREDIE Provider Portal is not affected by the current ELR disruption.

As a reminder, healthcare providers are no longer required to report negative COVID-19 laboratory results or patients with pending test results.
- **Counseling of Positive COVID-19 Patients**
Patients who test positive should be counseled to remain at home on isolation until meeting CDC's [Criteria for Discontinuation of Isolation](#).

KCPHSD staff continue to reach out to patients via phone and mail to complete case investigations and contact tracing. To expedite this process, KCPHSD has created an [online report form](#) for patients to complete at their convenience. The form is available both in English and Spanish and can be found by navigating from [Kern County Public Health main website](#) or from the [KCPHSD COVID-19 webpage](#) and click the green Self-Report Form button. Please inform patients that completing this form online makes

follow-up from Public Health faster and more effective. Patients who do not have internet access can call 661-321-3000 to be routed to a staff member who can help complete the documentation over the phone.

- **Clinical Management FAQs**

- *If a patient has clinically recovered from COVID-19 but tests positive for SARS-CoV-2 RNA persistently or recurrently, is the patient still infectious?*
 - While it has not been definitively established, it is unlikely that a recovered patient with persistent or intermittent positive test results is still infectious after meeting the criteria for discontinuation of isolation or transmission-based precautions. For most patients with COVID-19 infection, efforts to isolate live virus from upper respiratory tract specimens have been unsuccessful more than 10 days after symptom onset. In severe cases of illness, and among severely immunocompromised patients, live virus has been detected up to 20 days after symptom onset. There is no evidence to date that clinically recovered persons with persistent or recurrent detection of viral RNA have transmitted SARS-CoV-2 to others. Currently, it is unknown if antibodies that develop in response to SARS-CoV-2 infection are protective, and if they are protective, what antibody levels are needed to protect against reinfection.
- *If a patient who has recovered from COVID-19 (or who was asymptomatic during their infection), tests positive again, does the patient need to start a new isolation period?*
 - If the patient has clinically recovered, is within 3 months of the original symptom onset date (or test date for asymptomatic persons), and remains asymptomatic, then the patient does not need to undergo another isolation period. If the positive test is more than 3 months from symptoms onset, clinicians should consider the possibility of reinfection. Consider consultation with infectious disease specialists and public health.
- *If a patient has clinically recovered from COVID-19 but develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 later, should the patient be isolated and re-tested for SARS-CoV-2?*
 - Patients with new symptoms more than 3 months after the symptom onset of their original illness should be retested. If positive, the patient should be considered infectious and remain isolated until meeting the criteria for discontinuation of isolation or transmission-based precautions. Additionally, patients who are within 3 months of their original illness onset date, should be re-tested if alternative etiologies for the illness cannot be identified. Consider consultation with infectious disease specialists and public health.
- *If an infected patient has clinically recovered from COVID-19 and is later identified as a close contact of a new case, does the recovered patient need to quarantine?*
 - If it is within 3 months of symptom onset, the recovered patient does not need to quarantine or be retested for SARS-CoV-2 provided the patient remains asymptomatic. However, if the recovered patient is a contact to a new case 3 months or more after symptom onset, they should follow quarantine recommendations for close contacts.
- *If an infected patient has clinically recovered, should the patient continue to wear a cloth face covering in public?*
 - Yes. (Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance). In addition

For more details, see [CDC's Clinical Questions about COVID-19: Q&A](#) page.

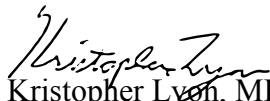
Previous bulletins from KCPHSD regarding COVID-19

- [2019 Novel Coronavirus Guidance for Healthcare Providers](#)
- [Additional Guidance for Healthcare Providers and FAQs](#)
- [COVID-19 Update for Healthcare Providers](#)
- [Risk Assessment and Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Clarification and Additional Testing Options Now Available](#)
- [Additional Healthcare Provider Updates for COVID-19.](#)
- [Kern County Cases, Additional Guidance for Laboratory Testing, Medical Health Resources Requests](#)
- [Health Officer, Discontinuation of Isolation, Laboratory Testing, Skilled Nursing Facilities](#)
- [COVID-19 Updates; Immunization Recommendations; Other Communicable Diseases](#)

The situation regarding COVID-19 continues to evolve in California, the U.S., and around the world. Interim guidance and recommendations are subject to change as more and more information becomes available. For the most up to date information, please refer to the [CDC website](#) and the [CDPH website](#).

If you have any questions, please contact KCPHSD by phone at 661-321-3000, via email at publichealth@kerncounty.com, or visit our [KCPHSD website](#).

Thank you,


Kristopher Lyon, MD
Health Officer