Overview of Point-of-Care COVID-19 Testing
Guidance for Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities

April 8, 2022

Nursing homes and assisted living facilities may use rapid antigen point-of-care (POC) tests to test personnel, residents, or visitors for COVID-19.

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) strongly encourages facilities to test:

- Personnel and residents who have symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status.
- Personnel and residents who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status.
- Nursing home personnel who aren’t up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. To determine how often personnel who aren’t up to date on their vaccinations should be tested, please refer to the latest requirements from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
- Visitors who aren’t up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. Facilities may also accept proof of a negative result from a POC test taken within 48 hours before the visit, or a PCR test taken within 72 hours before the visit. Visitors may get a POC test or a PCR test at a local pharmacy or primary care office.

Any facility can procure POC test kits themselves through medical supply vendors. Facilities receiving POC tests from the federal government may use those tests to meet any testing recommendations or requirements as well.

In accordance with requirements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, non-profit nursing homes and assisted living facilities are eligible to get POC tests through the State’s Community Support COVID-19 Testing Program. The following guidance provides information to facilities on how to enroll in the State’s Community Support Testing Program, program requirements, and recommended actions based on test results.

**Enrolling in the Community Support COVID-19 Testing Program**

This program supplies POC COVID-19 test kits to qualifying non-profit organizations. RIDOH will provide training materials and guidance so you may train your team, conduct the tests, and report all test results to RIDOH.

To request rapid POC test kits from RIDOH, non-profit nursing homes and assisted living facilities must:

- Have an approved CLIA certificate of waiver that covers COVID-19 POC or antigen tests.
  - If your facility already has a CLIA certificate of waiver to perform on-site testing, you can start testing personnel, residents, or visitors right away.
  - If your facility doesn’t already have a CLIA certificate of waiver, you will need to submit an application for licensure to RIDOH to begin testing personnel, residents, or visitors on site. Send your completed application to the Rhode Island State Health
Laboratories via an email to DOH.OFR@health.ri.gov. You can learn more about how to apply for a CLIA certificate of waiver at cms.gov.

- Sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with RIDOH in which you agree to:
  - Follow all instructions provided by the State’s Community Support Testing Program and the test kit manufacturer.
  - Develop policies and procedures on using COVID-19 test kits in your facility.
  - Ensure all staff performing the tests have met training requirements.
  - Report all test results to RIDOH.

Non-profit nursing homes or assisted living facilities interested in enrolling in the State’s Community Support COVID-19 Testing program should email kerri.reilly.ctr@ohhs.ri.gov. Please indicate if your facility already has an active CLIA certificate of waiver.

**Requesting Test Kits**

Once facilities submit a signed MOU and proof of their CLIA certificate of waiver, RIDOH will provide instructions on how your facility can order test kits.

You will receive information about the brand of rapid antigen test kits that will be supplied to you and details on how to use them. RIDOH will also schedule a time for your facility to pick up test kits. Facilities must pick up test kits at the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency warehouse located at 2700 Plainfield Pike in Cranston.

Please note that RIDOH will not fulfill new test kit requests if a facility has not used its prior allotment of tests or properly reported test results.

All staff administering POC tests within a LTCF must:

- Complete all online training modules before using these tests.
- Watch this video on administering COVID-19 tests.
- Read all package inserts and follow manufacturer instructions.
- Review information about POC testing from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Reporting POC Test Results to RIDOH**

Nursing homes and assisted living facilities must report all positive and negative POC test results to RIDOH. Facilities must report results through RIDOH's online portal at portal.ri.gov/reportcovidresult. This video shows you how to report results through this portal. If you have issues accessing the portal, contact RIDOH.RCSAdmin@health.ri.gov.

All results should be entered into the portal by the end of each day. It is especially important to report positive test results and outbreak investigations through the portal in a timely manner.

Anyone who is tested should be notified of their test result. Facilities must also follow any federal reporting requirements.

**Interpreting POC Test Results**
Anyone who gets a positive result on a POC test should be treated as a positive COVID-19 case whether or not they have symptoms or are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations. Facilities should notify RIDOH of all positive cases through the test result reporting portal and respond in accordance with all infection control procedures.

- Personnel and visitors who are positive should be denied entry into the facility. Advise them to isolate at home for at least 5 days and contact their healthcare provider. For more information, visit covid.ri.gov/whattodo.
- Residents who are positive should be isolated from other residents and personnel as much as possible. For more information, review RIDOH’s quarantine and isolation by population document.

Symptomatic personnel and residents who get a negative result on a POC test should get tested again to confirm their result.

- Personnel should follow up with their healthcare provider and get a PCR/NAAT test to confirm their negative POC test result. Symptomatic staff should not return to work based on a negative POC test. They should continue to isolate until they get the result of a PCR/NAAT test. If the second test result is negative, personnel can go back to work once symptoms have improved and they have been fever-free for 24 hours without using a fever-reducing medicine.
- Residents with symptoms of COVID-19 should isolate until their symptoms go away, even if their POC test result is negative. The resident may be tested again with a POC test 48 hours after the initial test. The resident should not be moved to a COVID-19 isolation unit unless they have a positive test result.

Asymptomatic personnel and visitors who get a negative test result may be allowed to enter the facility if they meet any additional screening criteria and follow other safety precautions, like wearing a mask.

Additional Information

- This guidance should not replace clinical judgment. Facilities should consult with their medical directors or providers for situation-specific considerations and frequently review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and RIDOH websites for updates.
- If you recently tested positive for COVID-19, the CDC and RIDOH do not recommend getting tested again for the following 90 days unless new symptoms develop.
- If POC test results reported to RIDOH include a patient’s phone number or email address, a copy of the result can be accessed electronically at portal.ri.gov/results.
- Facilities should not implement a testing protocol that delays the entry of those who need immediate access to the facility, such as emergency responders.
- For information about COVID-19 testing options in the community, visit covid.ri.gov/testing.

RIDOH COVID-19 Information Line: 401-222-8022
Monday – Sunday
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Email: RIDOH.COVID19questions@health.ri.gov