



TO:	CAL-MAT Members
FROM:	Dave Duncan, MD Director
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Revision/Version: New	Replaces: N/A
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SUBJECT: COVID Testing for CAL-MAT

PURPOSE: To clarify when COVID testing should be done for personnel deployed at field sites

Background

COVID testing capability and capacity remain insufficient and problematic in most areas. CAL-MAT personnel are working with COVID patients and living in close proximity with one another. Questions frequently arise regarding availability of testing and directives for testing deployed health care providers.

Policy/Procedure

Testing capability

- Each deployment site should make an arrangement for testing healthcare and MST personnel through the local health department, a local medical facility, or a private laboratory.
- Attempt to arrange priority testing or rapid result testing.
- EMSA plans to establish rapid testing for COVID antigen (BD Veritor) at each site.
 - Note: Antigen tests are not as sensitive as nucleic acid amplification assays such as PCR. Thus, positive results tend to be accurate, but a negative result should be interpreted with caution, and should be considered in the context of clinical suspicion of disease and risk status of the patient. Negative results for the BD Veritor antigen test should be treated as presumptive negative.
- Negative tests using either PCR or antigen testing can be repeated serially every 2-3 days if there is high suspicion for infection or high-risk exposure.

Symptomatic CAL-MAT or other healthcare worker on site

- Any person on site of a medical mission who develops symptoms suggesting possible COVID-19 infection should be immediately isolated and tested with a PCR test from a naso-pharyngeal swab.
- Rapid antigen test can be used, if available, subject to limitations noted above.
- See *CAL-MAT COVID-19 Isolation, symptom management, notification, and return to work (Rev 7-25-20)* for management of isolated staff.

Testing Asymptomatic CAL-MAT member during deployment

Possible exposure

- Per CDC Guidance: When a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified, interviewing and testing potentially exposed co-workers should occur as soon as possible to reduce the risk of further workplace transmission.
- If staff at a mission site are exposed to a known positive colleague, testing may be requested or mandated (in consultation with CAL-MAT Medical Director or EMSA Medical Director) for all staff as a condition of on-going employment
- CAL-MAT receive worker's compensation and occupational health benefits as well as continued housing and support during isolation (See Isolation policy below)
- Staff with very high exposure risk should be quarantined while awaiting test results (prolonged close contact without face masks, e.g., roommate, close contact for prolonged periods without wearing masks)
- Other staff with casual contact wearing masks may be allowed to continue work while awaiting testing.
- See
 1. CDC guidance for risk assessment *Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Work Restrictions for Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure to COVID-19*
 2. *Testing Strategy for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case Is Identified*
 3. and testing strategy flow diagram from CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/Testing-Strat-flow-diagram.pdf>

Other request for testing during deployment

- EMSA will arrange testing for a CAL-MAT or other employee on site who requests testing due to concerns of exposure
- Employees who request testing for other personal reasons should be directed to local resources for testing at their expense

CAL-MAT testing on deployment

- EMSA/CAL-MAT will not perform routine testing on deployment.
- This is not possible due to frequent urgency of deployment
- When antigen tests are available at all sites, this can be considered as an option, but there is no requirement at this time.
- This is consistent with other acute care healthcare sites.

CAL-MAT testing on demobilization

- Testing on demobilization from a CAL-MAT mission should be offered to employees.

- However, there are multiple limitations to this policy, since testing may not be readily available on-site and results may not be rapidly available.
- CAL-MAT members who have concern about returning to their household or other site of employment may use the State Quarantine Program, which offers paid hotel accommodations for up to 14 days (or until test results have returned). Hotel site can be near the site of EMSA deployment or near the employee's home.
- <https://covid19.ca.gov/hotel-rooms-for-california-healthcare-workers/>
- Salary is not paid during quarantine, but would be paid during the isolation period, if the test comes back positive.

The following individuals can perform NP swabs (per CDPH)

- EMTs and paramedics are authorized by the Director of the California Emergency Medical Services Authority to collect nasopharyngeal swabs only for COVID-19 testing and only for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. Additional information about the local option scope of practice allowing them to do this is available on the California Emergency Medical Services Authority webpage.
- Registered nurses can collect specimens using nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal swabs.
- Respiratory care practitioners are authorized under their scope of practice to collect specimens using swabs, including NP and OP swabs.
- Nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal swab collection is within the scope of practice for a licensed vocational nurse (LVN) as long as the LVN:
 - Receives specialized instruction in the proper procedure from a registered nurse or licensed physician;
 - Demonstrates the requisite knowledge, skills and ability prior to performance of the procedure; and
 - Performs the procedure in accordance with a licensed physician's order.

Resources, Links, and Attachments

EMSA/CAL-MAT policy: CAL-MAT COVID-19 Isolation, symptom management, notification, and return to work (Rev 7-25-20)

Cal-FIRE-EMSA policy for COVID antigen testing

Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Work Restrictions for Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure to COVID-19

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>

Testing Strategy for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case Is Identified

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support/hd-testing.html>

Testing Strategy for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case is Identified

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/Testing-Strat-flow-diagram.pdf>

Hotel Rooms for California Health Care Workers

<https://covid19.ca.gov/hotel-rooms-for-california-healthcare-workers/>

Program eligibility

To be eligible for this program, you must:

- Work in a California healthcare facility, including:
 - Medical transport providers and non-medical staff within health care facilities
 - Workers in California's Health Corps or CAL MAT, as designated by the State
 - Correctional facility staff
 - First responders
- Have presumed exposure to COVID-19
 - This facility needs to be documented by a state or county public health official or medical professional to house COVID-19 positive patients
 - Or healthcare workers who test positive for COVID-19 but do not require hospitalization
- Be unable to self-isolate or quarantine at home

How to reserve a room

- Call [1-877-454-8785](tel:1-877-454-8785) to complete a screening process. Do not share personal health information.
- Show your healthcare facility employee identification at check-in.
- Provide a credit card or another form of deposit at check-in.
- The Program does not include extra services from the hotel, such as food, room service, valet, parking, or laundry. You will be responsible for incidentals.

BD Veritor System instructions for use

<https://www.fda.gov/media/139755/download>