



Date: September 30, 2020
To: All AHS Zone Emergency Operations Centers (ZEOC) – for distribution to all teams responsible for collection of COVID-19 swabs including community and assessment center collections
From: Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
Re: Visualization Process for Priority Specimen Identification of COVID-19 Swabs

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

Effective immediately, COVID-19 swabs and requisitions on patients meeting priority criteria (i.e. **including those collected in the community collections and at assessment centers**) must be marked using the process outlined below, prior to transportation to the lab. The following Alberta Health priorities that are to be visually marked are:

- Symptomatic individuals (i.e. cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat)
- Outbreak Investigations by Public Health
- Close Contacts identified through Public Health Contact Tracing

NOTE: Healthcare workers, educators and other essential workers are included in the prioritization only if they fall within one of the above listed criteria.

Why this is Important:

This process will ensure that the lab can quickly and efficiently identify specimens that are to be processed first. This will improve the lab’s ability to meet the required 24-hour turnaround time for high priority COVID-19 test results.

Background

- APL continues to experience an increasing demand for prioritization of COVID-19 testing and therefore a process to prioritize testing within the province must be followed. Due to the massive volumes, swabs/requisitions not appropriately marked cannot be prioritized retroactively if they were not identified using this process.
- Please refer to the Alberta Health website for details: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-testing-in-alberta.aspx>

Action Required:

Step	Action	Details
1	Perform COVID-19 swab collection	Perform swab and secondary patient identification as per existing process.
2	Apply a black Sharpie “X” on both specimen and requisition for priority swabs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For specimens meeting the above criteria, apply a black Sharpie “X” on both the top of the cap of the specimen and the top right hand corner of the Requisition. 
3	Package and transport swabs and requisitions	<p>Assessment Centers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package and transport tubes as per the Racking Process for COVID-19 Samples at Assessment Centers Lab Bulletin <p>All Other Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place specimen vial in the specimen bag • Place folded requisition in the sleeve of the bag, ensuring the black Sharpie “X” is visible • Transport swabs to designated lab as per established process



Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

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This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

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- Carolyn O'Hara, Interim Chief Medical Laboratory Officer, APL