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BCD 2020-02

To: Wisconsin Local Health Officers, Tribal Health Officials, Infection Preventionists, and Health Care Providers

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New requirements for reporting cases and patients under investigation for COVID-19

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Summary

Since being identified in late 2019, the COVID-19 has been causing respiratory illnesses in residents of, and travelers from, Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 is also occurring in a growing number of regions globally, necessitating concerted efforts by public health and clinical partners to contain the spread of this epidemic.

The purpose of this memo is to notify Wisconsin public health and health care partners that **patients under investigation for COVID-19, and suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are now reportable conditions** in accordance with [Wis. Stat. ch. 252](#) and [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 145](#). This memo also provides information about the process for identification, follow up and testing for Novel Coronaviruses. Additional details on this outbreak are available on the [DHS Outbreaks and Investigations page](#) and the [CDC website](#).

Testing for COVID-19

Patients under investigation for COVID-19 (see criteria below) should be tested as soon as possible for COVID-19 using a PCR test that is currently only available at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. Commercially available diagnostic tests designed for other coronaviruses are not suitable for detecting this new virus.

For initial diagnostic testing for COVID-19, CDC recommends collecting and testing upper respiratory specimens (nasopharyngeal (NP) AND oropharyngeal (OP) swabs, in viral transport media (VTM)), and lower respiratory specimens (sputum, if possible) for those patients with productive coughs. Induction of sputum is not indicated. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a patient under investigation is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset. This is a rapidly evolving situation and guidance may change, so be sure to check the CDC website for the [current recommendations](#).

When a patient under investigation is identified that requires testing, the Division of Public Health (DPH) will coordinate with the health care provider and local health department to have the specimens sent to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH), which will forward specimens to CDC for testing if applicable. Be sure to follow the appropriate infection control precautions when collecting and shipping specimens.

Patients under investigation

The criteria for identifying patients under investigation as of February 3, 2020, can be found below. Collecting information on travel history is an essential part of routine patient assessment (see BCD numbered memo [2018-07](#)). Each patient identified as a possible patient under investigation should be evaluated and discussed with DPH, particularly if their clinical presentation, travel history, or exposure is unclear. The patient under investigation guidance is subject to change based on updated information. **Contact DPH immediately if you are notified of a patient that meets one of the follow criteria:**

Patients under investigation criteria as of February 3, 2020*		
Clinical Features		Risk
Fever or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath)	AND	Any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	AND	A history of travel from Hubei Province, China within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	AND	A history of travel from mainland China within 14 days of symptom onset

**This is a rapidly evolving situation and guidance may change. Please check the CDC website for the [current patients under investigation criteria](#).*

Reporting of patients under investigation

Health care providers should contact DPH directly to report patients under investigation, and DPH will review and approve each patient for laboratory testing. Local health departments will be asked to collect data on patients under investigation, using the one-page short form referenced in the Guidance for Health Departments from CDC section below. **Local health departments should fax completed patient under investigation forms to DPH at 608-261-4976.**

Guidance for Health Departments from CDC

- [CDC Patient Under Investigation Form](#) (PDF)
- [CDC Patient Under Investigation Form](#) (Word)
- [Information for Public Health Professionals](#)

Guidance for Health Care Providers, Laboratories, and Infection Control from CDC

- [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [Information for Laboratories](#)
- [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Known or Patients Under Investigation for COVID-19 in a Healthcare Setting](#)
- [Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Patients Under Investigation \(PUIs\) for COVID-19](#)

To request approval for testing during business hours or for questions, call DPH at 608-267-9003. For after-hours testing approval call 608-258-0099 and ask for the communicable disease epidemiologist on call.