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TO: Healthcare Providers, Healthcare Facilities, Clinical Laboratories, and Local Health Departments

FROM: New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)

**HEALTH ADVISORY: NOVEL CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)**  
**Specimen Collection Training for Unlicensed Individuals**

**SUMMARY**

- COVID-19 testing is available at the NYSDOH Wadsworth Center and select clinical laboratories.
- On March 7, 2020, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed Executive Order 202 in response to the Novel Coronavirus of 2019 Disease (COVID-19) public health emergency, which permits unlicensed individuals, upon completion of training deemed adequate by the Commissioner of Health, to collect throat or nasopharyngeal swab specimens from individuals suspected of being infected by COVID-19, for purposes of testing.
- On April 25, 2020, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed Executive Order 202.24 in response to the Novel Coronavirus of 2019 Disease (COVID-19) public health emergency, which permits licensed pharmacists to be designated as a qualified healthcare professional for the purpose of directing a limited service laboratory, to test patients suspected of a COVID-19 infection or its antibodies, provided that such test is FDA-approved and waived for use in a limited service laboratory.

**COVID-19 SPECIMEN COLLECTION BY UNLICENSED INDIVIDUALS**

- Specimen collection by unlicensed individuals should occur only under the direction of a licensed healthcare professional who is authorized to order a COVID-19 test.
- The licensed healthcare professional is responsible for ensuring delivery of the NYSDOH Training for Sample Collection Procedure for SARS-CoV-2 Testing, as approved by the NYS Commissioner of Health, and providing general supervision to the unlicensed individuals conducting specimen collection. This training is available on the [Health Commerce System](#).
- The licensed healthcare professional is responsible for ensuring the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is available and any necessary fit testing and medical clearance for respiratory protection (respirator/N95 mask) is obtained for those conducting specimen collection under their supervision.
- Unlicensed individuals who are trained to conduct specimen collection should be professionals in a healthcare-related field who have knowledge and experience with the donning and doffing of PPE and experience performing or assisting with medical procedures. These professionals may include:
  - Emergency Medical Personnel, including emergency medical responders (EMR), emergency medical technicians (EMT), advanced emergency medical technicians (AEMT), and paramedics;
  - Phlebotomists;
  - Pharmacists;
  - Respiratory Therapists;
  - Certified Nurse Assistants;

- Dentists;
- Dental Hygienists;
- Veterinarians;
- Veterinarian Technicians;
- Students in nursing and medical programs; or
- Students in programs for those professions listed above.

*Providers who have questions regarding this guidance may contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 during business hours or 1-866-881-2809 evenings, weekends, and holidays.*

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[NYS Local Health Department Directory](#)

[NYSDOH COVID-19 Website](#)

[CDC COVID-19 Website](#)

[World Health Organization \(WHO\) COVID-19 website](#)