



**This is an official
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) Alert**

MESSAGE ID: MSHAN-20200624-00452-ALT (Health Alert)

RECIPIENTS: All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, and
Healthcare Providers – Statewide

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

SUBJECT: Updated Guidelines for Submitting COVID-19
Reports to MSDH

Dear Colleagues,

The Mississippi State Department of Health has recently been experiencing issues with the MSDH surveillance database that have both impacted the reporting of cases publicly and led to potential delays in case and contact investigation.

To achieve our shared goal of limiting the occurrence and spread of COVID-19 in the state, MSDH is asking for your assistance in several key areas.

Key Points (see full description below)

- **Please begin the transition away from faxed reports of COVID-19 positives; the preferred means is through electronic reporting. MSDH will continue to accept faxed reports for a short time longer, but asks that this transition begin now. In order to facilitate this transition:**
 - **Facilities that submit COVID-19 samples to LabCorp, Quest, Mayo, AEL or the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory are no longer required to submit an additional report of COVID-19 to MSDH for those samples. The electronic report these laboratories submit to MSDH meets the reporting requirement.**
 - **When electronic lab reporting is not available, instead of faxing reports, healthcare providers and facilities are asked to utilize the MSDH Online Case Reporting system <https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/static/14,0,194.html>.**
- **It is no longer necessary to report COVID-19 positive labs by telephone to MSDH. COVID-19 associated deaths should still be reported by telephone.**
- **Please report all suspected or confirmed outbreaks or clusters of COVID-19 to the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725.**
- **Please recommend immediate isolation of all COVID-19 cases, and recommend quarantine and testing of their close contacts.**



Reporting

Soon, MSDH will transition to accepting COVID-19 reports by electronic means only as the preferred and expected mechanism. The numbers of faxed reports received by MSDH daily are leading to delays in data entry and case investigation and ascertainment. When this transition takes place in the future, faxed reports will no longer be accepted or satisfy COVID-19 reporting requirements.

Until that time, we are asking that you begin to transition from faxed reporting to one of the following electronic reporting mechanisms. **While MSDH will continue to accept faxed reporting for a short time longer, the goal is to receive all reports of COVID-19 by electronic means.**

1. Electronic Laboratory Reporting

There are many commercial and reference labs that report positive COVID-19 results directly to MSDH through electronic laboratory reporting (ELR). Below is a list of reference laboratories currently sending COVID-19 ELR messages to MSDH.

- LabCorp
- Quest
- Mayo
- AEL
- The Mississippi State Department of Health Public Health Laboratory

If your facility, hospital or clinic setting submits COVID-19 specimens to one of the listed commercial or reference labs, there is no need to submit an additional report of this positive result to MSDH from your facility. MSDH will accept the ELR from the commercial or reference laboratory for COVID-19 as the official report.

2. Physician Card Reporting

COVID-19 positive results from your facility that are not performed at one of the above listed laboratories (e.g., point of care tests, in-house tests, other reference/commercial labs) will still require reporting to MSDH through normal processes.

The preferred reporting mechanism in lieu of a faxed report when ELR is not available is through MSDH Online Case Reporting (the “Physician Card”). This system requires an account which is simple to set up. Please see this website to set up an account, access a user guide, and submit a disease report online at https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,194.html.



3. Telephone Reporting

It is no longer necessary to report COVID-19 positive labs by telephone to MSDH.

We are receiving positive laboratories through traditional reporting methods; therefore, a telephone report is not required. Please ensure that your facility or clinic is reporting COVID-19 through your routine laboratory reporting processes already established as described above.

We request that you still report COVID related deaths by telephone to 601-576-7725 (601-576-7400).

4. Required Data Elements

The following minimum data elements must be included when submitting a COVID-19 report through electronic laboratory reporting, MSDH Online Case Reporting or while faxed reports are still accepted:

- Patient name
- Patient street address, including county and zip code
- Patient phone number with area code
- Patient date of birth
- Patient race, including ethnicity
- Patient gender
- Patient date of onset of illness
- Date of Collection
- Method of diagnosis (test type, e.g., PCR, serology, antigen)
- Performing facility name
- Test result
- Provider name, facility name, address, telephone number

Outbreaks

We rely on healthcare providers and facilities to provide visibility of potential clusters or outbreaks of COVID-19. You will routinely become aware of potential outbreaks prior to MSDH. If you identify cases of COVID-19 that have common source social exposures (e.g., attended the same party, church or other gathering), residents in congregate settings, or share the same workplace, please notify the Mississippi State Department of Health at 601-576-7725.



Isolation and Quarantine

In order to facilitate rapid isolation of cases and quarantine of contacts to interrupt transmission, MSDH requests the following:

- Recommend immediate isolation for all symptomatic individuals waiting for COVID-19 test results.
- Isolate all COVID-19 positive cases for 14 days from date of onset if symptomatic, or 14 days from date of collection if asymptomatic. MSDH recommends a time and symptom-based strategy for the discontinuation of isolation. See https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/8632.pdf.
- Recommend testing and 14-day quarantine for all close contacts to the case (should remain in quarantine for full 14 days even if initial test is negative).

The recommendations you provide to your patients will provide a much earlier start to isolation and quarantine and can make the difference in disease transmission.

Thank you for your assistance and please feel free to contact the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725 with questions or concerns.

Paul Byers, MD
State Epidemiologist



Alerting Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency: Mississippi State Department of Health
Alerting Program: MS Health Alert Network (MS HAN)
Message Identifier: MSHAN-20200624-00452-ALT
Program (HAN) Type: Health Alert
Status (Type): Actual ()
Message Type: Alert
Reference: MSHAN-00452
Severity: Unknown
Acknowledgement: No
Sensitive: Not Sensitive
Message Expiration: Undetermined
Urgency: Undetermined
Delivery Time: 600 minutes

Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency: A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

Alerting Program: The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

Message Identifier: A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT (**ALT=Health Alert**, **ADV=Health Advisory**, **UPD=Health Update**, **MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service**)).

Program (HAN) Type: Categories of Health Alert Messages.

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Health Info Service: Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

Status (Type):

Actual: Communication or alert refers to a live event
Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
Test: Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded



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Message Type:

- Alert: Indicates an original Alert
- Update: Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
- Cancel: Indicates prior alert has been cancelled
- Error: Indicates prior alert has been retracted

Reference: For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

Severity:

- Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property
- Severe: Significant threat to life or property
- Moderate: Possible threat to life or property
- Minor: Minimal threat to life or property
- Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

Acknowledgement: Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

Sensitive:

- Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
- Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Expiration: Undetermined.

Urgency: Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

Delivery Time: Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).