



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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To: Local Health Departments

From: Melinda Wilkins, DVM, MPH
Communicable Disease Division Director

Subject: Flu specimens for testing at the Bureau of Laboratories

As we move into the flu season this fall, we would like to remind our public health partners that the MDCH Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) will only be conducting testing of flu specimens for targeted populations (pregnant women with severe illness, unusual presentations, ICU hospitalizations, and cases associated with facility outbreaks). Diagnostic flu testing will not be performed by the MDCH BOL. Several commercial and clinical labs are now available to do diagnostic flu testing. The criteria for testing at the MDCH lab for the fall season were distributed in mid-August to LHDs, clinicians, and hospitals and can be reviewed online at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Clinician_guidance_influenza_testing_algorithm_289033_7.pdf.

The MDCH Bureau of Epidemiology has been reviewing recent influenza testing submissions to the MDCH lab to determine the level of compliance among providers in following the flu testing criteria. About two-thirds of flu specimens do not indicate a reason for testing, nor is this information entered into the Michigan Disease Surveillance System (MDSS). We are concerned that a number of providers are not aware of the testing criteria and are continuing to submit specimens to MDCH BOL for diagnostic testing.

To address this we will be tasking our regional epidemiologists with contacting local health departments to notify them of the providers who are sending in flu specimens without a reason for testing. Owing to limited resources at our BOL, *we are asking local health jurisdictions to continue to stress to their providers the importance of following the flu specimen testing criteria.* A shortage of reagents used in flu testing is not unforeseen and we do not want to deplete the reagent supply with inappropriate testing before the flu season is underway.

MDCH appreciates the efforts you are making to provide current influenza messaging to providers in your communities. Please feel free to contact us at (517) 335-8165 with any questions.