

Influenza Surveillance, Reporting and Testing Guidance for Laboratories 2020–2021 Influenza Season

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)
October 2020

This guidance outlines MDHHS recommendations on influenza surveillance, reporting, and testing for laboratories. Future updates may be issued as needed in the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional guidance for influenza testing and reporting can be found at www.michigan.gov/cdinfo and www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71551_2945_5103---,00.html. Please call MDHHS Communicable Disease Division (517) 335-8165 or Bureau of Laboratories (517) 335-8063 with any questions.

Surveillance Activities

- Influenza surveillance is **especially important this season** to understand respiratory virus circulation patterns in the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic. Local viral surveillance data informs potential impact on healthcare systems and guides clinical decision-making for patients with respiratory illness symptoms.
- MDHHS participates in the CDC ‘Right-Size’ influenza virologic surveillance approach, centering on four aspects: *Situational Awareness* (monitoring the prevalence and spread of influenza viruses year-round), *Vaccine Strain Selection* (ability to detect a drift variant), *Anti-viral Resistance Monitoring* (timely detection of resistant viruses), and *Novel Event Detection* (early identification of a novel flu virus). **Year-round surveillance is necessary to maintain these detection goals.**
- MDHHS participation in the CDC Influenza Hospitalization Surveillance Project (IHSP) will continue during the 2020-2021 influenza season. This project will provide population-based rates of hospitalization due to severe influenza illness through active surveillance and chart review of lab-confirmed cases from October 1st - April 30th for Clinton, Eaton, Genesee, Ingham, and Washtenaw Counties.
- Prompt reporting of pediatric influenza-associated deaths (<18 years) continues to be required https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/Influenza_pediatric_mortality_investigation_603970_7.pdf
- MDHHS highly encourages reporting of influenza hospitalizations (ICU admissions, severely ill pregnant or postpartum women, patients with unusual and/or severe presentations) of all ages, and adult deaths into the Michigan Disease Surveillance System (MDSS) by local health departments and healthcare providers.
- Vigilance for variant strain influenza viruses (e.g. swine-associated) should be maintained through all months of the year and all suspected cases should be tested for influenza – contact MDHHS to discuss testing options
- Patient status information (**inpatient or outpatient**) should be marked on the test requisition form for all influenza specimens submitted to MDHHS to assist in characterizing influenza disease severity
- Michigan influenza activity is summarized in the MI Flu Focus weekly report (www.michigan.gov/flu).

Testing

- Submission of influenza-positive specimens to MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) from a representative sample of outpatients, hospitalizations, and adult deaths is encouraged throughout the year. **Please send up to 10 positive influenza specimens per month.** Specimen submission from all *pediatric deaths* and cases associated with *congregate facility respiratory outbreaks* should be prioritized.
- MDHHS BOL will utilize RT-PCR testing for Influenza A and B. Influenza A subtyping or influenza B lineage determination is performed on all influenza-positive specimens. A subset will be sent for genetic sequencing and antiviral resistance testing. See [MDHHS Antiviral Resistance Information](#).
- For influenza-like illness specimens without a known etiology (e.g. outbreak specimens) MDHHS will initially perform multiplex PCR testing for Influenza A, B, and SARS-CoV-2. Complete test requisition form **MDHHS-5895 Influenza SARS-CoV-2 Multiplex Assay (Flu SC2)** – *this form will be available soon at* https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71551_2945_5103---,00.html

- **All suspect variant, novel, or zoonotic-transmission specimens should be immediately submitted to MDHHS BOL for confirmatory testing and characterization.**
- Healthcare providers and labs should consider the low positive predictive value of rapid influenza diagnostic tests (i.e. false positives) during times of low influenza prevalence in the community. Confirmatory testing at MDHHS should be sought for rapid test-positive specimens (or negative specimens) from patients with a high clinical index of suspicion for influenza. Please include all clinical testing results AND **inpatient or outpatient status** on the MDHHS test requisition form.
- The MDHHS Microbiology/Virology Test Requisition Form DCH-0583 should continue to be used for submitting influenza positive specimens https://www.michigan.gov/documents/DCH-0583TEST_REQUEST_7587_7.pdf Specimens requiring both influenza and SARS CoV-2 testing (unknown etiology outbreaks) should be accompanied by test form *MDHHS-5895 Influenza SARS-CoV-2 Multiplex Assay (Flu SC2)*.-- available soon at https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71551_2945_5103---,00.html

Reporting Requirements and Recommendations

Required Reporting

- **Weekly counts of influenza-positives:** Report aggregate weekly counts of influenza-positive cases to your infection preventionist or local health department as per your previously established protocols. *Do not include serologic positives.* Year-round reporting is important,
- **Pediatric influenza-associated deaths (<18 years):** Individual case reporting is required as soon as possible (within 24 hours).
- **Facility outbreaks:** All congregate setting outbreaks are required to be promptly reported.
- **Suspect avian, zoonotic, or novel strain influenza:** Individual case reporting is required. Cases should be reported immediately without delay
- **International travel cases** (*within 2 weeks of symptom onset*): Individual case reporting is required.

Recommended Reporting

- Unusual or atypical presentations of influenza
- Severe hospitalized (ICU) cases
- Pregnancy-associated cases

Prompt reporting of these individual cases to your local health department is requested.

Please REMEMBER to record Patient Status (Inpatient, Outpatient**) on the MDHHS Test Requisition Form for all submitted influenza specimens**