RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REQUESTING COVID-19 LABORATORY TESTS AT HOME FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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PUERTO RICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Approval and Implementation

The Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDH) complying with its constitutional duty to oversee the health of everyone in Puerto Rico, monitors the needs of the most vulnerable populations. These populations include people with any type of physical, intellectual and/or mental health disability, who will require the coordination of assistance services for their health and wellbeing. To this end, we have developed this document regarding the Recommendations for Requesting the COVID-19 Laboratory Test at Home for People with Disabilities.

This document has been developed to facilitate screening and diagnosing populations with disabilities who are facing the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is intended as a guide to the processes that will facilitate access to the services of testing for people with disabilities, as well as those in their direct environment who would also be impacted by the individual’s health situation. These recommendations complement the planning included in the PRHD’s COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, based on an assessment process addressing all the components that affect this kind of situation. Therefore, implementing the suggested steps will require extensive cooperation, collaboration and exchange of information throughout the different sectors involved in its compliance.

[signature: Lorenzo González Serrano, MD]
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Secretary of Health
Requesting the COVID-19 Test at Home

There are people in Puerto Rico who, because of a disability, the state of their health, or because they are taking care of a person who requires supervision or has a disability, cannot physically go to a clinical laboratory to get tested for COVID-19. Because of the close contact for supervising and supporting the daily tasks of these populations, it is difficult for these families to implement the appropriate isolation at home. For this reason, we recommend performing the test at home through the services of a clinical laboratory. It is also crucial that a doctor provides the order or referral for taking the sample for the COVID-19 test of all the household members who live with the person with disabilities.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this document, the following are some of the populations who would require this type of assistance as well as the recommended steps for requesting the assistance.

I. Populations Recommended to Have COVID-19 Testing at Home

The following populations have been identified as needing the service, although there could be more:

1. People who have state catastrophic coverage or who are terminally ill
2. Blind people
3. People with mental health disabilities
4. People with intellectual disabilities
5. People with a compromised immune system
6. People with incapacitating disabilities
7. People with mobility issues
8. People with breathing problems and/or diseases
9. Bedridden persons
10. Single mothers or fathers as well as caretakers with more than one minor child, person with a disability and/or senior person in the home
   - They are recommended that in order to comply with the isolation, they should not go all together in one vehicle, but they cannot leave the minors and/or persons under their care alone at home.

II. Steps to Request the COVID-19 Testing Service at Home (See Diagram 1)

1. The person should contact their doctor to request a medical order for the test, either in person or by telephone.
2. If you cannot reach your doctor, you should contact your Health Insurance Plan to schedule an appointment with another doctor, either in person or by telephone.

3. If, according to the medical criteria, the person has COVID-19 symptoms, the person should request a medical order for testing him/herself and all the members of their household.

4. The person or their doctor should ask their laboratory for their email address so the doctor can send them the order. The doctor can also send it directly to the person and, if the person has the means, they can send it directly to the laboratory.

5. The person should call the laboratory to confirm they received the referral to prevent it from getting lost.

6. The person should schedule the appointment with the laboratory so they go to the person’s home.

7. Not all the clinical laboratories do testing at home, so:
   - Before sending the order, check if the laboratory can do the test at the person’s home.
   - If they do not, contact another laboratory. They can contact the health insurance plan to find out which laboratories do testing at home.

8. If the doctor did not issue a medical order for all the household members and you think all of them could have been exposed, contact 787-977-0909, 800-981-0031 or send an email with your name and telephone number to info@opp.pr.gov.
PERSON WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS:
- a. Adult with a disability;
- b. Minor with a disability; and/or
- c. Caretaker of an adult or child with a disability.

Contact your primary doctor or health insurance plan to request a visit to the doctor’s office or assistance by telephone.

Visit doctor’s office or via telemedicine. Evaluation of possible COVID-19 case

Follow doctor’s instructions as discussed.

Referral to COVID-19 test for all the household members.

Yes

No

Follow doctor’s instructions as discussed.

Yes

No
Contact your preferred testing laboratory to confirm if they test at home, or contact your health insurance plan to coordinate with a laboratory that can take the sample in your home.

Because of the proximity between the family member or caretaker and the person with the disability, it is recommended that the doctor orders testing for all the household members. If that is not the case, you can contact 787-977-0909, 800-981-0031 or email your name and telephone number to info@opp.pr.gov.