



Communicable Disease Branch Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Weekly Key Points

April 7, 2020

The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) Communicable Disease Branch will be releasing COVID-19 weekly key points that includes information discussed on the weekly Tuesday Local Health Department call. For questions, contact the NC DPH) Communicable Disease Branch 24/7 Epidemiologist on Call at 919-733-3419.

COVID-19 Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings

All COVID-19 outbreaks in a congregate living setting should be promptly investigated and reported to the 24/7 Epidemiologist on Call at 919-733-3419. **An outbreak of COVID-19 in a congregate living setting is defined as two or more laboratory confirmed cases in residents or staff within two incubation periods (28 days) in the same facility.** The [CD Manual](#) contains the following documents to assist in investigating and tracking outbreaks:

- COVID-19 Outbreak Worksheet: used to collect the initial data when the LHD is notified of the outbreak and contains the information that the Epidemiologist on Call will ask when the outbreak is reported to NC DPH
- Line list template: tool that can be used by the LHD or the facility to investigate and track the outbreak
- LTCF Outbreak Steps related to COVID-19: guide to investigating outbreaks in congregate living settings

Please conduct the following during your investigation as soon as possible:

- Link new cases to the outbreak event in NCEDSS
- Provide updates on priority information about these outbreaks including any deaths or increases in cases or hospitalizations to your regional TATP nurse
 - Please work with your regional TATP nurse to determine what is feasible for you

COVID-19 Testing for Persons in Congregate Living Setting

Persons who live or work specifically in congregate living settings, are considered a priority group for testing. Below is guidance on testing these persons depending on whether they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

- Symptomatic persons in congregate living settings
 - Testing is available through the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health and commercial and hospital-based laboratories
 - The facility can utilize whichever lab they typically use for testing
- Asymptomatic persons in congregate living settings with a COVID-19 outbreak
 - Testing is available through commercial and hospital-based laboratories
 - The North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health has limited capacity to test asymptomatic persons. Testing at the State Lab of asymptomatic persons in congregate living settings with a COVID-19 outbreak will be determined on a case by case basis in consultation with local and state public health.



COVID-19 Death Reporting

A COVID-19-associated death is defined for surveillance purposes as a death resulting from a clinically compatible illness that was confirmed to be COVID-19 by an appropriate laboratory test. There should be no period of complete recovery between the date of COVID-19 diagnosis and the date of death. COVID-19 deaths now receive their own disease classification in NCEDSS. If you have a COVID-19 death in your county:

- Ensure the death information is filled out properly in the clinical package of the event
- Edit Event Properties from the dashboard and change the disease to Coronavirus Death
- Deaths for which there is inconsistent information in the event might not be counted and the state may contact you to correct the information in the event

A death should not be reported if:

- There is no laboratory confirmation of COVID-19. This might change in the future, but we are not yet ready to receive deaths among persons who do not have laboratory-confirmed COVID-19.
- COVID-19 illness is followed by full recovery to baseline health status prior to death
- After review and consultation there is an alternative agreed upon cause of death

COVID-19 Exposure Risk Period

[New guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that the **exposure risk period for COVID-19 now extends from 48 hours prior to symptom onset** until the person meets the criteria to discontinue home isolation. This impacts the following:

- [Contact tracing](#)
 - We recommend identifying any close contacts of the confirmed case starting 48 hours before symptom onset of the case
- Notifications of cases on flights
 - If a COVID-19 case traveled in the 48 hours before symptom onset, please notify NC DPH
 - LHD staff can put the person's travel history into NCEDSS and email the NCEDSS Event ID to their TATP nurse
 - OR
 - Fax the information to the secure Communicable Disease Branch fax at 919-733-0490, attention Movement and Monitoring.
 - Please obtain the person's airline flight numbers and seat assignments, if possible

Hydroxychloroquine Availability

NC DHHS has received hydroxychloroquine from the Strategic National Stockpile. This is for treatment of hospitalized patients only. NC DHHS has communicated with the hospitals about how to request hydroxychloroquine. Additionally, NC DHHS has a supply of donated hydroxychloroquine that we will work with long term care facilities to access.