

# MLS Laboratory Update: Specimen Submissions for 2024-2025 Respiratory Disease Surveillance

DECEMBER 30, 2024

## Purpose of this Message:

To communicate to MLS clinical laboratory partners of modifications to specimen submission guidance for seasonal influenza surveillance.

## Action Item:

MDH is asking laboratories to only submit **HOSPITALIZED** patient specimens under Project 1492 that are

- PCR positive for influenza (either A or B), or
- rapid antigen positive or negative, or
- not subtyped (e.g. H1)

Please discontinue sending outpatient specimens for routine seasonal surveillance under Project 493. See additional information below.

## Background:

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) conducts influenza disease surveillance through case reporting and laboratory submission. The specimens that clinical laboratory partners send to the MDH Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL) are an essential part of this surveillance and allow for genotyping, subtyping and further characterization of influenza. MDH-PHL is now receiving more than enough specimens for continued situational awareness of circulating influenza strains and detection of any potential novel influenza event. To keep MDH-PHL within its testing capacity, **we are asking laboratories to discontinue sending specimens for characterization from non-hospitalized patients unless specifically requested for outbreak investigation.** Hospitalized surveillance continues unchanged as does sentinel surveillance from pre-determined sites.

### When To Submit Specimens to MDH-PHL:

- **HOSPITALIZED surveillance – Project 1492**
  - Specimens submitted from persons who are hospitalized with ILI\* or clinical suspicion of influenza OR deceased following ILI\* or clinical suspicion of influenza.
  - **If your laboratory is performing onsite influenza testing by RT-PCR:**
    - Submit positive influenza A specimens that are un-subtyped, subtyped as “seasonal H1,” or “indeterminate subtype” to MDH-PHL for further characterization as they may be variant influenza strains.

- Do not routinely submit positive influenza A specimens that are subtyped as H1N1pdm09 or H3 to MDH-PHL.
- Do not submit specimens that are negative by PCR for influenza A and B to MDH-PHL.

\* ILI is defined as **fever > 100° F, and cough or sore throat** in the absence of a known disease other than influenza.

- **NON-HOSPITALIZED LABORATORY surveillance – Project 493**
  - Only when requested for outbreak investigation by MDH Epidemiologists.
- **CLUSTER investigation or other unusual circumstance** for which MDH has requested a specimen(s) be sent to MDH-PHL.
- **SENTINEL surveillance** – These facilities are pre-determined and have a specific protocol. Specimen submission guidelines for these programs have not changed. If you have any questions regarding specimen submission guidelines for your program, please check with your MDH contact.

## Additional Information:

### Weekly Influenza Activity Webpage:

Thank you to the laboratories that are providing weekly influenza data. Results of the data gathered from various MDH influenza surveillance programs can be found on the [MDH Weekly Influenza Activity webpage \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/stats/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/stats/index.html).

### General Notes:

- Please ensure that all submitted specimen remnants meet submission guidance found within the [Infectious Disease Laboratory Test Catalog \(https://labinventory.web.health.state.mn.us/#/\)](https://labinventory.web.health.state.mn.us/#/). It is not necessary to perform recollection on patients when remnant specimen do not meet submission guidance.
- MDH-PHL offers to facilities **both** electronic order entry and report delivery using a submission portal. The submission portal allows for secure, electronic delivery of test orders and results. If interested, please contact Ginny Dobbins, Health Informatics Supervisor, 651-201-4546, [Ginny.Dobbins@state.mn.us](mailto:Ginny.Dobbins@state.mn.us) or [health.idl.informatics@state.mn.us](mailto:health.idl.informatics@state.mn.us).

### Questions:

For questions on laboratory testing please contact: Sarah Namugenyi, Interim Virology Unit Supervisor; 651-201-5691, [Sarah.Namugenyi@state.mn.us](mailto:Sarah.Namugenyi@state.mn.us)

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