

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance: Testing for DAs/SSAs

Testing guidance for Designated Agencies/Specialized Services Agencies who are doing 'in home care' for people with developmental disabilities

Surveillance testing of staff:

Vermont Department of Health currently recommends weekly PCR testing of all staff working in long-term care facilities regardless of vaccination status. While DA/SSAs do not fit into this category, their consumers often require a similar level of care and possess a similar level of risk of severe outcomes if exposed to COVID-19. For this reason, it is felt that surveillance testing recommendations for the long-term care setting may be transferable to this setting. For reference, please review the most recent [Health Alert from October 8th, 2021](#), detailing testing recommendations in this setting.

While using PCR testing for weekly surveillance is preferred, in the absence of access or availability, a weekly antigen test may be considered.

- It should be noted that point of care antigen testing at this interval for surveillance purposes is less sensitive and effective than PCR testing.
- It should also be noted that this may not be a consistent option for surveillance testing due to supply chain considerations and need for prioritization.

Antigen testing symptomatic staff or consumers:

Consent should be obtained on anyone being tested, please refer to your legal teams for guidance in this regard. Please refer to the Binax testing team (ahs.binaxnowtesting@vermont.gov), and your licensing teams in regard to pre-requisites/training requirements for use of these tests in this setting.

Antigen tests may be used on symptomatic staff or consumers to aid in early identification of infection and assist in rapid contact tracing efforts.

- If a symptomatic staff or consumer tests antigen positive, they should follow [the guidance for a positive COVID-19 case](#).
- If a symptomatic staff or client tests antigen negative, they must seek confirmatory PCR testing within 24-48 hours before they can come out of quarantine.
 - For staff this means being excluded from work.

- For consumers this means following quarantine guidance within their home. Staff working with consumers on quarantine should follow appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and infection prevention and control protocols.
- If a symptomatic staff or consumer has COVID-19 symptoms and is a known close contact of a positive case, this may be enough to consider them infectious even without a positive test. Please consult your medical provider with any questions related to this scenario.

Antigen testing asymptomatic staff:

- The preferred test for someone who is asymptomatic after an exposure is PCR testing. However, for individuals working with vulnerable populations who have had significant/ongoing exposure it may be indicated to use point of care antigen testing for rapid detection of infection.
- When antigen test supply allows, you could consider testing fully vaccinated staff who have had a significant exposure daily at start of shift. This could be considered throughout their exposure period and until they have received their PCR test results collected on day 5-7 after their final exposure.

The following are baseline testing recommendations for fully vaccinated people who have had an exposure to COVID-19.

For staff or consumers who are fully vaccinated and had a limited exposure:

- Get PCR tested 5-7 days after the exposure
- Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following the exposure or until their test result is negative.
- Isolate immediately if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive.

For staff or consumers who are fully vaccinated and have ongoing exposure:

- Get PCR tested 5-7 days after their *first* exposure. A person with COVID-19 is considered infectious (starting 2 days before they develop symptoms, or 2 days before the date of their positive test if they do not have symptoms).
- Get PCR tested again 5-7 days after the end of isolation for the person with COVID-19 (10 days from the onset of symptoms, or 10 days from the positive test collection if they remained asymptomatic).

- Wear a mask when in contact with the person with COVID-19 throughout the infected person's isolation period.
- Wear a mask indoors in public until 14 days after the infected person's isolation period ends or until the fully vaccinated close contact receives their final test result.
- [Isolate](#) immediately if they develop [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or test positive.

For staff who are unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated and are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case:

- [Quarantine is recommended.](#)
- Unvaccinated/partially vaccinated staff may end work exclusion and quarantine with a negative PCR test collected on or after day 7 since their last exposure so long as they remain asymptomatic.
- When staff are trained in the appropriate use of PPE, and adequate PPE is used during their exposure, there may be times when an unvaccinated or partially vaccinated staff member does not need to quarantine. Please review the [Guidance for Work Exclusions among Health Care Workers who have been Exposed to COVID-19.](#)

For consumers who are unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated and are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case:

- [Quarantine is recommended.](#)
- Unvaccinated/partially vaccinated consumers may end quarantine with a negative PCR test collected on or after day 7 since their last exposure so long as they remain asymptomatic.
- Staff working with consumers on quarantine should follow appropriate PPE and infection prevention and control protocols.