

Gov. Pritzker Announces New Efforts to Expand Testing, Procure Personal Protective Equipment

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Chicago – Providing an update on statewide efforts to expand testing and procure critical supplies, Governor JB Pritzker announced new COVID-19 testing sites, expansion of testing guidelines, an elimination of supply chain problems as they relate to raw materials for testing, and efforts to procure and distribute personal protective equipment (PPE).

"We are utilizing our incredible statewide network of Federally Qualified Health Centers to launch new testing locations in communities across Illinois", said Governor JB Pritzker. "These new sites will feed specimens to our network of expanded laboratory capacity. We have sites coming online across Chicago, the Collar Counties, Peoria, and Southern Illinois with many more centers expressing interest and working to get their operations up and running."

EXPANSION OF TESTING

The state has partnered with Thermo Fisher to help improve testing capacities at the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) labs and across the state, and Thermo Fisher committed to prioritizing Illinois in its supply chain management. IDPH's five machines are now up and running with reliable results. As Illinois ramps up testing over the next week the state estimates a new capacity of thousands more tests per day at state labs alone.

The governor also announced that the state has eliminated our supply chain problems as they relate to viral transport medium (VTM) and swabs. These raw materials are critical to helping labs expand the number of specimens that can be collected and tested.

University partners of Illinois Tech, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and the University of Illinois at Chicago and at Urbana-Champaign, as well as outside vendors, have committed to providing Illinois with an abundance of VTM and swabs that allows the state to stock state labs, as well as support additional labs throughout the state. Labs in need of supplemental VTM or swabs to boost their in-house testing capacities can send requests through their local Emergency Management Agencies.

In order to collect more specimens to meet our new capacity, the governor announced that the state will be expanding testing through its statewide network of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FHQCs). In coordination with the Illinois Primary Healthcare Association, Illinois surveyed centers to gauge their interest in helping Illinois expand testing and is now working with dozens of centers to begin taking specimens.

Sites that will be coming online include TCA Health in Roseland and Chatham; Howard Brown locations in Chicago's Englewood, Hyde Park, Austin and Little Village; Heartland Alliance Health in Chicago; Aunt Martha's in Chicago Heights, Harvey, Joliet, Kankakee, Danville, and Chicago's South Side; the Erie Family Health Centers in the Evanston-Skokie region, Humboldt Park, and Waukegan; Quorum Health in Waukegan; VNA Healthcare in Aurora, Carol Stream, Romeoville and Elgin; Heartland Health Services in Peoria; and Christopher Greater Area Rural Health, which will have 9-12 sites across Southern Illinois.

Dozens more are working to bring their operations online in the coming days. For the most up-to-date list of these sites, visit coronavirus.illinois.gov. There residents can also find information on eligibility for testing and contact information for each testing site.

In order to keep expanding testing across communities, the governor announced an expansion of the State of Illinois' recommended testing criteria to include all those who are experiencing COVID-like symptoms. This new guidance will apply to state-run drive through testing centers and will be offered to medical providers across Illinois.

Two days ago, Illinois opened its third state drive-through site. The new site in Markham took over 600 specimens on its first day of operation. With this new site, our three drive-throughs now have the ability to run up to 1,800 tests per day. We are thankful to our partners at Northshore University Hospital in Evanston, IL and Reditus Laboratories in Pekin, IL, who are committed to quick turnaround times for these state-run drive-through sites.

The state continues to urge people with mild symptoms to call their medical provider before seeking a COVID-19 test.