



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

MAYOR BREED ANNOUNCES THREE NEW DRIVE-THRU/DROP-IN COVID-19 TESTING SITES FOR THE PUBLIC AND ADDITIONAL PRIORITIZED TESTING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS

San Francisco expects to have seven drive-thru/drop-in COVID-19 testing sites by next week. City-run lab has increased its capacity threefold.

Prioritized COVID-19 testing for front line first responders and health care workers will serve as an interim step to help preserve San Francisco's capacity to serve the public during this emergency.

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed and Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health, today announced prioritized COVID-19 testing for critical first responders and health care workers who are essential to the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as three new mobile testing sites available to members of the public who have a clinician referral.

The San Francisco Health Service System (SFHSS) reached an agreement with the City's two largest private health service providers, Kaiser Permanente and Blue Shield of California, to prioritize COVID-19 tests for San Francisco first responders and health care workers showing symptoms of the virus. Kaiser and Blue Shield are making these changes across their entire network. Supporting this agreement, the Department of Public Health (DPH) issued a health advisory this morning to San Francisco clinicians and labs to similarly prioritize testing for these two classes of workers, in addition to high-risk and vulnerable populations.

DPH continues to test City employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace and are experiencing symptoms. However, COVID-19 is present in our communities and first responders and healthcare workers may also be exposed in other ways. As an interim step, San Francisco first responders and health care workers who are covered under the City's Kaiser or Blue Shield health insurance plans can contact their primary care physician starting today and indicate they are in one of the two priority COVID-19 test classes. Upon confirmation that their symptoms indicate that a COVID-19 test is needed, their test will be prioritized along with other tests for high-risk, vulnerable patient classes. The City is also expanding resources available to first responders and healthcare workers through SFHSS and its nurse triage hotlines to assist them with getting tested.

"The prioritization of COVID-19 testing for frontline workers, along with people who are most vulnerable, will help us make sure our health care system can continue serving the public and taking care of people who need help," said Mayor Breed. "We are so grateful for all the health



care workers and first responders who are stepping up and responding to this pandemic, and we will continue to prioritize efforts to support them during this challenging time.”

Mayor Breed also announced that the City has worked with North East Medical Services (NEMS), and Brown & Toland Physicians to establish three new mobile testing locations for the public in San Francisco. Patients will need a clinical referral to be tested at these mobile testing locations. NEMS, an important health provider for the Chinese American community, will open their two new sites in the Outer Sunset and Chinatown early next week. The Brown & Toland site is scheduled to open at the end of next week near Oracle Park. The three new sites augment the four COVID-19 mobile testing locations currently available through Kaiser Permanente, UCSF, One Medical and Sutter CPMC. The Sutter and UCSF locations are prioritized for use by their health care employees and first responders. The City is continuing to pursue additional testing partnerships and opportunities for expansion.

In addition, the San Francisco Department of Public Health Laboratory this week has increased its testing capacity three times. By automating certain parts of the process, the DPH Public Health Laboratory can now run 150 tests per day, up from 50. The testing turnaround time is one to two days and typically much faster than other laboratories, which allows the City to take quicker action to conduct contact investigations and minimize spread.

The expanded availability of testing is expected to increase the number of positive COVID-19 cases confirmed in San Francisco. As of March 24, San Francisco along with other Bay Area counties issued a health order requiring laboratories performing COVID-19 tests to report all testing data to state and local health authorities. The City is working with UCSF and UC Berkeley to use these data and develop models to understand the spread of virus in the community and inform strategies.

“We expect to see higher numbers of positive cases with the increasing capability of COVID-19 testing. I want to be clear that not everyone needs to get tested. There are still national shortages of testing material, which means we need to prioritize our tests to those on the frontline, and for those most vulnerable and at-risk from the virus,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. “I cannot stress enough that getting tested is not the most effective way to stop the spread. The most effective action you can take is to stay at home, and if you must go out to follow all social distancing recommendations.”

“Our paramedics, EMTs, and firefighters serve a critical role in public health and safety,” said Chief Jeanine Nicholson, San Francisco Fire Department. “As such, members of the San Francisco Fire Department and other first responders must be prioritized for COVID-19 testing when symptomatic. We are so grateful to our Health Service System partners for recognizing the need for this testing. This is invaluable in enabling us to continue to meet our mission of caring for the citizens of San Francisco.”

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