



# Health Advisory

## Slowing COVID-19 Community Transmission: Role of Healthcare Providers

November 25, 2020

### Situational Update and Key Messages

- San Francisco is experiencing a significant level of community COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.
- Healthcare providers play a critical role in reducing community transmission through low-barrier testing and case finding, reinforcing case isolation and quarantine of close contacts, supporting housing and social support needs of patients, timely reporting of cases, and reinforcement of prevention messages.
- These efforts should be prioritized for persons living in highly affected communities, including [populations facing structural barriers to health](#).
- Detailed [FAQs for healthcare providers on isolation and quarantine](#) can be found at [www.sfcddp.org/covid19hcp](http://www.sfcddp.org/covid19hcp).
- Patients with flu-like symptoms will require evaluation for COVID-19. [SFPDH has issued a health update for clinicians about testing and managing influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Please continue to actively vaccinate and promote vaccination against seasonal flu.

### Recommendations

#### *Testing*

- COVID-19 testing by clinicians can help identify cases early to prevent further transmission. The [Health Advisory on Testing Priorities](#) provides details regarding the 4 tiers of priority for COVID-19 diagnostic testing in San Francisco:
  - **Tier 1:** Hospitalized individuals with COVID-19 symptoms, testing as part of outbreak investigation and management.
  - **Tier 2:** Any symptomatic individual, as well as asymptomatic individuals in higher risk settings (e.g. congregate living and healthcare settings, emergency services workers, etc); and close contacts of confirmed cases.



- **Tier 2A:** Asymptomatic populations with [Structural Barriers to Health](#) (e.g. people experiencing marginalization and health inequities)
- **Tier 3:** Asymptomatic Individuals in Higher Risk Occupations (e.g. retail, food services, manufacturing, agriculture, public transportation, and education)
- **Tier 4:** Those not mentioned above
- The November 6, 2020 update of [Health Officer Order No. C19-15c](#) **requires hospital systems and larger group practices in San Francisco to test all individuals in Tiers 1, asymptomatic close contacts, and symptomatic individuals in Tier 2 (including children) and strongly encourages testing individuals in the remaining tiers per the prioritization above.** The revised November 6 Health Officer Order **also requires the same systems and providers to test all individuals in Tier 2 and 3 who are essential workers mandated by the state or county to undergo screening tests to work. Currently this includes staff at skilled nursing facilities and schools.**
  - For individuals who are symptomatic or close contacts, testing must be offered on the same day as the care visit, or the next calendar day.
  - For essential workers who are mandated by the state or county to undergo screening tests to work, testing must be offered within 7 days of request.
  - Providers should ensure patients have proper information to isolate or quarantine while awaiting test results and ensure patients are promptly notified about test results.
    - This [booklet](#) outlines what patients should do after getting tested and is available in [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#) and [Tagalog](#). It can be found at [www.sfcddcp.org/i&q](http://www.sfcddcp.org/i&q)
  - Because PCR tests can remain positive long after an individual is no longer infectious and there is high demand for testing city-wide, **providers should not order repeat PCR tests to document negative status for someone with recently diagnosed COVID-19 infection to facilitate patients returning to work.**
    - Employers are explicitly advised not to request documented negative status after recovering from COVID-19 ([www.sfcddcp.org/rtw](http://www.sfcddcp.org/rtw)). Providers can give [this letter](#) ([www.sfcddcp.org/workletter](http://www.sfcddcp.org/workletter)) to patients who request documentation for when they can return to work and why they will not receive repeat testing to document negative status after their COVID-19 diagnosis.
- Testing children and youth who have been exposed to COVID-19 is crucial to preventing outbreaks in schools and other group settings, since many children with COVID-19 are asymptomatic.
  - Testing children whose family or household members have COVID-19 is especially important, since most children are infected by an adult in their home.
  - Testing children exposed to COVID-19 will also allow some children to return to school and other group settings earlier:
    - Children who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 must quarantine at home for 14 days after their last close contact with the person. If ongoing contact cannot be avoided, as in the case of a parent or other family member with COVID-19, the child must remain at home until 24 days after the



person with COVID-19 began having symptoms, or if the person was asymptomatic, 24 days after the positive COVID-19 test was collected. However, children who are tested and found to have COVID-19 may return to usual activities as soon as 10 days after their symptoms began, or if asymptomatic, 10 days after the positive test was collected.

#### *Case Isolation and Quarantine of Close Contacts*

- Inform patients that test positive for COVID-19 that they must rapidly mask, separate from others, and self-isolate.
- [Identify close contacts \(including children\)](#) and instruct cases that contacts must quarantine and test immediately, regardless of symptoms. If feasible, facilitate same-day testing for household contacts.
  - Close contacts include household contacts, intimate partner contacts, and any other close contacts (less than 6 feet away for more than 15 minutes total over a 24 hour period regardless of whether individuals had face coverings on) starting from 48 hours before symptom onset or, if patient is asymptomatic, 48 hours before testing. Information regarding close contacts should be sent to SFDPH contact tracing team at [www.sfcdcp.org/covid19cmr](http://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19cmr).
- Per the May 15, 2020 [Health Advisory](#), clinicians should provide the [Isolation and Quarantine Directives and Guidelines](#) (posted with translations at [www.sfcdcp.org/i&q](http://www.sfcdcp.org/i&q)) to:
  - Patients in whom COVID-19 is clinically suspected or confirmed by a diagnostic test
  - Close contacts of a person with COVID-19

A simpler booklet version of Isolation and Quarantine information can also be found at [www.sfcdcp.org/i&q](http://www.sfcdcp.org/i&q)

#### *Referring for assistance in housing and social supports for suspected or confirmed patients with COVID-19*

- It is important to assess whether patients are able to self-isolate at home, and whether they need food, housing, and other social support to do so safely.
- For patients who need assistance, please call **311**; they will guide you to the correct destination to assess whether the patient qualifies for isolation housing and help provide supportive social services for patients to self-isolate at home. Providers can complete a [web-based referral form](#) (posted at <https://covid19isorequest.getcare.com/referral>) for people who need placement in an isolation and quarantine hotel.
- Patients needing help with resources or services including food, cleaning supplies, etc. can also contact **311**.
- DO NOT discharge patient to the street or a congregate setting in which bathrooms or kitchens are shared by multiple households without discussing with the Containment Call Center at 628-652-2820.



### *Reporting cases and outbreaks to DPH*

- Complete reporting of cases, including ethnicity, race, gender identity, and housing status, to SFDPH is critical to ensure effective and equitable deployment of public health interventions.
- **Lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases should be reported within 24 hours of diagnosis** by email or fax to SFDPH per the April 30, 2020, [Health Advisory](#).
- The **SFDPH COVID-19 Response Line (628) 217-6105** should be called immediately for:
  - Fatal confirmed case
  - Case who is a patient or staff in a long-term care or skilled nursing facility
  - Case who is experiencing homelessness and/or living in congregate settings
  - Cluster of 3 or more cases in health care workers at the same facility
  - Cluster of 3 or more cases of unexplained pneumonia or deaths in a congregate setting

### *Reinforcing COVID-19 Prevention*

- Please continue to emphasize the following important messages to all your patients:
  - Stay home to the extent possible while caring for your mental and physical health. See more at [www.sfgdcp.org/safersocial](http://www.sfgdcp.org/safersocial).
  - Discourage your patients from traveling during the holiday. See the [SFDPH Travel Advisory](#) at [www.sfgdcp.org/travel](http://www.sfgdcp.org/travel)
  - Encourage patients to get the flu vaccine. See [www.sfgdcp.org/fluproviders](http://www.sfgdcp.org/fluproviders)
  - If you leave your home:
    - Avoid gathering with people outside your household
    - If you must gather with people outside of your household, avoid being indoors. Outdoor interactions are much safer.
    - Keep your social circles small and stable.
    - Cover your face (both mouth and nose) with a bandana, scarf, cloth, or mask.
    - Keep at least 6 feet between you and people outside your household at all times.

### **Additional Resources**

Health advisories and alerts are posted at [www.sfgdcp.org/health-alerts-emergencies/health-alerts/](http://www.sfgdcp.org/health-alerts-emergencies/health-alerts/).

See [www.sfgdcp.org/covid19hcp](http://www.sfgdcp.org/covid19hcp) for additional COVID-19 information and guidance for San Francisco health care providers.