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Memorandum

TO: Health Care Facility Chief Executive Officers, Administrators, and Occupational Health Leadership

FROM: Elizabeth D. Kelley, MPH, MBA, Director
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

SUBJECT: Anterior Nares (Nasal Swab) Specimen Collection by Unlicensed Healthcare Personnel

DATE: September 17, 2020

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal and local partners on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and we continue to appreciate the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation.

DPH considers anterior nares (nasal swab) specimen collection for testing for COVID-19 to be minimally invasive. Since anterior nares specimen collection is minimally invasive, unlicensed healthcare personnel, such as nurse aides and medical assistants, may observe and perform anterior nares (nasal swab) specimen collection for COVID-19 testing. Only licensed healthcare personnel with appropriate training and competency can perform a nasopharyngeal specimen collection for purposes of COVID-19 testing. All personnel performing specimen collection should be trained and demonstrate competency to be able to safely collect specimens. When collecting specimens or within 6 feet of patients suspected to be infected with COVID-19, all healthcare personnel must maintain proper infection control and use recommended personal protective equipment, including an N95 or higher-level respirator (full face shield and face mask if N-95 not available), eye protection, gloves, and a gown, when collecting specimens.

DPH strongly encourages all healthcare personnel in Massachusetts to monitor the CMS and CDC website for up-to-date information and resources:

- CMS website: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page>

- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

Additionally, please visit DPH's website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>.