



Missoula City-County Health Department's Sentinel Testing Plan

COVID – 19 Testing in Missoula County

Revised*: June 19, 2020

The Missoula City-County Health Department formed a COVID-19 Testing Task Force to develop and implement a coordinated testing program to address disparities, ensure countywide access, and support the County's COVID response. We are mindful of public concern about COVID-19 testing and we support strategies that help community members and critical infrastructure workers make informed decisions about their health and that of their families.

Through increased coordination of existing testing capacity, as well as partnerships with healthcare providers, our goal is to reach 1,800 COVID-19 tests per week through sentinel testing. This strategy for a type of "early warning system" is aligned with Governor Bullock's tiered approach to testing and is designed to protect individuals at a high-risk for COVID exposure and transmission like healthcare workers and others.

In alignment with State guidance, testing priorities for the County include:

- Tier I: Symptomatic individuals
- Tier II: Staff and residents associated with long-term care facilities
- Tier III: Tribal nations, including urban Indian populations
- Tier IV: Individuals that have been in high-risk environments for viral exposure and transmission
- Tier V: Other individuals in group living situations (i.e. detention, dormitories, and homeless shelters)

Tiers II through IV are not meant to be prioritized, but to be efforts that are occurring simultaneously. Our symptomatic testing sites will continue operating as they have been and will take priority if case numbers increase. Testing of the long-term care facilities will be done by the facilities themselves, in direct coordination with the State. Tribal testing is also being conducted with direct State coordination. The Task Force will look at ways we can offer testing to urban Native Americans residing off their reservation. The University of Montana is developing a testing plan for students that will be returning in the fall and will coordinate directly with the State about that plan.

As there are not enough test kits available to test all community members, sentinel testing of high-risk asymptomatic individuals will be conducted through a coordinated approach within the community. The County Testing Clinic will serve individuals that are not currently experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and have been in high-risk environments for exposure or transmission. The County criteria prioritizes health care workers and first responders, grocery store and service industry workers, personal care workers, individuals experiencing homelessness, daycare and preschool workers, camp staff and counselors, and County residents returning home to Montana.



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We anticipate updates to our strategy to address changing needs across the County, as state and federal guidance is updated, as more resources become available, and as the epidemic evolves. Our current strategy relies on nucleic acid based COVID-19 tests as these have good and well understood performance and are readily available. At this time serological (antibody) testing remains unreliable for diagnosing infection and predicting immunity and therefore is not being used in our testing strategy at this time.

* Note: This plan was originally approved on June 12, 2020. The revisions made on June 19, 2020 changed the order of the original text to better reflect both the State DPHHS Plan and the County Testing Site Plan for implementing Sentinel Testing locally. The plan remains the same. These changes were made to improve understanding of the plan itself.