## Pre-Approval Requirement

- **Contact your Regional and/or Local Health Department** ([https://www.dshs.texas.gov/regions/2019-nCoV-Local-Health-Entities/](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/regions/2019-nCoV-Local-Health-Entities/)) to ensure patient meets Person Under Investigation (PUI) criteria for testing and to obtain Epidemiologist (Epi) approval and PUI ID to test. Specimens **MUST** meet PUI criteria for testing prior to shipping and **WILL NOT** be tested without prior approval.
- Complete the CDC COVID-19 PUI and Case Report Form. For the most current version of the PUI form, please visit the DSHS COVID-19 website ([https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/)) under “Information for: Public Health”.
- All REQUIRED items on the G-2V submission form(s) must be completed prior to testing. See additional details under “Specimen Shipping” section.

## Testing Criteria


- DSHS Testing Algorithm
- DSHS Criteria to Guide Testing of PUIs for COVID-19
- CDC COVID-19 PUI and Case Report Form

The decision to test a patient is appropriately made by the patient’s attending healthcare provider in consultation with public health. Specimens from individuals who meet the Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) will be prioritized for testing based on resources. If resources at Metro Health LRN Laboratory are at capacity, specimens meeting testing criteria may be forwarded to other public health laboratories or CDC for testing.

## Specimen Type

Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab

**DO NOT** send additional specimen types (serum, urine, etc.) to Metro Health LRN Laboratory.

## Specimen Collection and Handling

- Specimens should be collected as soon as possible after onset of illness, preferably within the first 3-4 days. Although some viruses may be detected after longer time periods, the likelihood of recovering most respiratory viruses diminishes after 3-4 days.
- **Maintain proper infection control** when collecting specimens. Guidance can be found at [https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/index.html#a4](https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/index.html#a4)
- All specimens must be labeled with at least two patient specific identifiers (e.g. PUI’s name [First and Last] and date of birth). The identifiers must appear on both the primary specimen container and the associated G-2V submission form. Please see the specimen identification guidelines at [https://www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/mrs_specimens.shtm#Label](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/mrs_specimens.shtm#Label) for additional details and acceptable patient identifiers.
  - Make sure the patient’s name and other approved identifiers on the form exactly match what is written on the specimen tube.
**Specimen Collection and Handling (continued)**

- Collect **only** an NP swab.
- Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Do not use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden shafts, as they may contain substances that inactivate some viruses and inhibit PCR testing. Place swabs immediately into sterile tubes containing 2-3 ml of viral transport media.
- **Collection Techniques**
  - Nasopharyngeal swab: Insert a swab into the nostril parallel to the palate. Leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions. Swab both nasopharyngeal areas with the same swab.

  Refrigerate all specimens at 2-8°C promptly after collection and ship overnight or transport to laboratory on ice packs. If specimens will not arrive within 72 hours of collection, they should be stored frozen at -70°C and shipped on dry ice.

**Specimen Shipping**

- Transport specimens to the laboratory as soon as possible.
- If shipping specimens through a courier, specimens may be shipped Monday-Thursday for receipt at the Metro Health LRN Laboratory Tuesday-Friday. Weekend delivery will be considered on a case by case basis and requires **PRE-APPROVAL**. Please contact your Regional and/or Local Health Department to initiate the weekend approval process.
- Complete a **DSHS G-2V Virology Specimen Submission Form**
  - A separate G-2V is required for each specimen submitted.
  - A submitter ID is required to submit specimens.
    - To request a submitter ID, please complete the **Submitter Identification (ID) Number Request Form** available at [www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/MRS_forms.shtm#Microbiological](http://www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/MRS_forms.shtm#Microbiological) and follow the instructions for submitting the form.
    - Please include an email address in section 3 of the **Submitter ID Request Form** for a faster response.
  - Patient Information: Please include the assigned TX PUI ID number on the G-2V form (e.g. TX Year-Month-Date-Region-Number, TX2020-0311-008-0002)
  - Section 3: Specimen Source, select “Nasopharyngeal” and select "swab"
  - Section 4: Virology, select “Other” and write in “COVID-19”.
  - Section 6 of the G-2V For Payor Source:
    - Please mark “IDEAS” as the Payor Source

**Specimen Shipping Continued**

- Do not place the G-2V form with the primary container; if a specimen leaks during transport, the G-2V form will be contaminated.
- Specimens submitted without the proper forms and/or complete information may be delayed.
- **Ship/Deliver to:** San Antonio Metro Health LRN Laboratory, 2509 Kennedy Circle, Building 125, B-level, San Antonio, TX 78235
- For other laboratory-related questions, please call Metro Health Laboratory at (210) 207-0842.