Riverside County Community Health Agency
Department of Public Health

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
DISEASE CONTROL BRANCH
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Revised Interim Guidance on Specimen Collection, Processing, and Testing for Patients with Suspected Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Virus Infection

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Pandemic H1N1 2009 Influenza continues to circulate in Riverside County. As of August 26, 2009, 226 confirmed and 55 probable cases have been reported in the County with 2 H1N1 related deaths.
As influenza season approaches it is important that testing for H1N1 focus on priority patients meeting the case definition for influenza like illness (ILI), which includes: Fever $\geq$ 100 °F and cough with or without a sore throat.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recommends that outpatients with ILI be evaluated through the existing California Sentinel Surveillance System, with testing by CDPH Viral lab.

Specimens must meet the following criteria for testing by Riverside County Public Health Laboratory:

- Fatal cases
- Hospitalized patients, with an emphasis on ICU patients
- Health Care Workers with direct patient contact
- Individuals in high risk settings (e.g. schools, correctional facilities) as determined by Public Health.

The attached H1N1 lab submittal form must be completed with all requested information and be submitted with the specimen. Specimens without the required information will not be tested.

Please note that Riverside County Public Health laboratory will routinely be conducting PCR testing one day per week. Appropriate specimens must be received by 5:00 pm on Tuesday to be included in the weekly run. Please contact Disease Control at (951) 358-5107 to discuss urgent situations.

Respiratory specimens:

Riverside County Public Health laboratory will only accept nasopharyngeal swabs. Swab specimens must be collected using swabs with a synthetic tip (e.g. polyester or Dacron®) and an aluminum or plastic shaft. Swabs with cotton tips and wooden shafts are never to be used for this test. Specimens collected with swabs made of calcium alginate are not acceptable. The swab specimen collection vials should contain 1-3ml of viral transport medium (e.g. containing protein stabilizer, antibiotics to discourage bacterial and fungal growth, and buffer solution), such as M4RT or the BD Universal Viral Transport System (http://www.bd.com/ds/productCenter/220240.asp). Specimens should be kept at 4°C until they can be placed at -70°C. If a -70°C freezer is not available, specimens should be kept at 4°C, preferably no longer than 1 week.