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TO: Providers  
FROM: Thomas John Bender, Medical Director  
DATE: March 14, 2020  
RE: COVID-19 Testing

As the COVID-19 response continues to evolve, Bay County Health Department (BCHD) urges you to help prevent and mitigate spread of the virus by emphasizing social distancing and appropriate hygiene to prevent disease spread such as:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water.
- Daily disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, following cleaning agent package instructions.
- Directing coughs and sneezes into a tissue or elbow.
- Staying home when symptomatic.

People with respiratory illness symptoms should be advised to stay home and call **before** visiting any health care facility. Vulnerable populations, especially the elderly, should avoid social contact and refrain from visiting health care facilities except when absolutely necessary. Symptomatic patients should not go to a hospital emergency department unless they feel their condition has so deteriorated as to require hospital admission.

Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing). COVID-19 test results will not change clinical management, which is limited to supportive care only. However, test results are useful for informing decisions related to infection control and for surveillance purpose. Please follow CDC guidelines for collecting nasopharyngeal specimens.

Specimens collected from the following categories of patients should be prioritized and sent to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) laboratory for testing:

- Symptomatic patients experiencing severe illness.
- Symptomatic patients associated with a facility or congregate setting with potential for case clustering.
- Persons engaged in high risk professions such as health care providers and first responders.
- Persons being monitored because of exposure to a known case.

Specimens collected from all other patients, especially those who are mildly symptomatic, should be sent to a commercial laboratory offering COVID-19 testing, such as Quest Labs or LabCorp.

Thomas John Bender, MD, PhD, FACOEM  
Medical Director  
Bay County Health Department