



Maine Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Application to Provide COVID-19 Swabbing Services Guidance

Additional copies are available from:

Maine EMS

152 State House Station

45 Commerce Drive

Augusta, ME 04333-0152

(207) 626-3860

TTY (207) 287-3659

Fax (207) 287-6251

maine.ems@maine.gov

<https://maine.gov/EMS/>

**Maine Department of Public Safety
Maine Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

August 25, 2020

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This document outlines the procedure by which licensed EMS agencies within the State of Maine can become authorized to conduct COVID-19 swabbing activities. The application is intended to prompt services that are interested in participating in Maine Department of Health and Human Services' Swab and Send sites to address the logistics of conducting swabbing and the responsibilities associated with notification of individuals regarding their test results.

Disclaimer: Maine EMS' authorization of a service's application to conduct COVID-19 swabbing must not be interpreted as endorsement or approval of the proposed processes. It is incumbent on the individual agency to maintain compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations and/or guidance regarding COVID-19 swabbing including, but not limited to, guidelines published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. CDC) and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC).

I. Background

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic within the United States and the State of Maine, it has become apparent that there may be additional opportunities for the emergency medical services system to assist and support mitigation and recovery efforts. This application is intended for those EMS agencies that are interested in expanding their available services to include nasopharyngeal, mid-turbinate, and/or anterior nares COVID-19 swabbing. Maine EMS has opted to enable and authorize this expanded scope of practice through the mechanism of a community paramedicine framework. COVID-19 swabbing within the community is not a function of the 911 system and thereby is not easily covered by traditional 911 procedures and/or practices. Requiring participating agencies to utilize existing, current infrastructure and/or to create necessary infrastructure is critical to ensuring safety during swabbing, appropriate specimen logistics management, and finally a pathway for communicating results to individuals involved in the swabbing program.

II. Introduction

This document is intended to serve as an overview of the application. The actual application for a service to apply to be authorized to provide these services must be completed through the online eLicensing portal (EMS Agency Swabbing Application). This guidance document outlines the

necessary components that services will be expected to submit as part of their online application process. If you or others from your service have any additional questions or concerns regarding the application process, please do not hesitate to reach out to Maine EMS by emailing ems.licensure@maine.gov.

III. Components of the Online Application

This section will define each of the distinct components required to submit a successful application to become authorized to provide COVID-19 swabbing within the State of Maine.

A. General Project Description

Describe how your service intends to provide COVID-19 swabbing services including, but not limited to:

- Identifying potential venues where swabbing will be conducted (e.g. drive through swabbing, walk-in swabbing at the department, contracted swabbing for local healthcare facilities, community paramedicine home visits [the latter requires authorization to provide community paramedicine services], etc.)
- It is important to include any and all pathways that the agency may utilize as part of delivering swabbing services. Expansion beyond original submissions, is possible, but will require updates to Maine EMS.
- Include specific details about anticipated hours of operation, number of days per week the service can be maintained, and number of individuals that could be swabbed per hour based on anticipated staffing.

B. Selection of the Type of Swabbing

Indicate the type(s) of swabbing to be provided as part of the swabbing services (nasopharyngeal, mid-turbinate, and/or anterior nares as well as whether they will be obtained via self-swabbing). This will be listed as a multi-select option as part of the application. The service must also identify their source(s) of swabbing supplies. For those not working directly with a healthcare system and offering swabbing services separately (i.e. Swab and Send sites), it is acceptable to list the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC). This free response space should clearly articulate where the service will acquire supplies to conduct swabbing.

C. Affiliation(s) to Existing Programs

If your service intends on supporting existing swabbing efforts (such as a hospital-based program) by providing trained staff only, then the service should indicate the healthcare entity(s) that they intend on providing staffing to. For instance, if your service is hospital-based and you're simply providing EMS clinicians to help conduct the swabbing, but the hospital is managing all of the logistics and follow-up processes, you would indicate that hospital here.

If your service will *not* be affiliated with an organization that has an existing operation and/or intends on operating its own swabbing venues or operations, then it is important to list that you intend on functioning, or *also* intend on functioning, as a stand-alone service.

D. Patient Interaction Plan

Provide further detail from the general project description as to how your service intends on managing patient interactions including, but not limited to:

- Detailing the type of swabbing locations and modalities (e.g. drive-throughs, walk-in capacity, etc.). *It is important to note that for organizations to qualify as Maine Department of Health and Human Services Swab and Send programs, they must maintain capacity to conduct swabbing year-around (i.e. through the winter months).*
- Outlining a general safety plan that can be used across all of their swabbing venues. This must include information about how the service intends on:
 - Informing and enforcing social distancing;
 - Encouraging masking; and
 - Providing appropriate supplies for public compliance with current recommendations.
- Describing how appointments will be made for swabbing to minimize crowds and congregating; scheduling appointments will likely be essential. Services must describe the technology they will utilize to schedule appointments for swabbing. Additionally, it will be important for the agency to describe how they intend to protect patient privacy and compliance with HIPAA guidelines. For instance, if the agency chooses to utilize a third-party software application for scheduling, it must be secure to protect patient health and identifying information with current state and federal guidelines for health information security.
- Developing education materials for the individuals that they are swabbing including, but not limited to:
 - Written information on how and when the individual will receive test results;
 - Written information on next steps to take following testing, including information about remaining in isolation until results are reported, signs and symptoms of infection or worsening infection, and how to obtain follow-up medical care and/or to address questions about diagnosis if they test positive for COVID-19; and
 - Services must provide individuals who are known to be close contacts of individuals with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, with written information outlining expectations for maintaining self-quarantine based on current guidelines. Services must have at least one member of the swabbing team on-site at each swabbing venue who has completed a contact tracing course for COVID-19 to assist with this process.

Services must develop a plan of how they will screen individuals as being close contacts of individuals with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 and refer individuals to the team member who has completed the training and is located on-site at the swabbing venue.

E. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Supply Chain

Document the current or proposed pathway for personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies. *It is important to note, the current stockpile of supplies from Maine CDC serves as the source of last resort and will be reserved for EMS agency's 911 operations.* Services wishing to participate in swabbing will be responsible for sourcing enough PPE to provide these services, including masking of the individuals participating in the swabbing if not in their cars.

F. Logistics Plan

Detail how specimens will be maintained at the specified conditions defined by U.S. and Maine CDC, once they are collected from the patient based on their described swabbing venues (i.e. swabs obtained from a home visit will likely have a different logistics pathway as compared to a drive-through). This plan must detail what equipment the service will utilize to maintain temperatures for the samples at the swabbing site through delivery to the lab conducting the analysis. The service must also detail the procedure by which they will ensure consistency of the specimen temperatures (i.e. a temperature log recorded every hour), and if it is part of a mobile swabbing service how it will be secured in the vehicle (for instance, if using a fridge in the back of the EMS unit). The service will then need to detail the following:

- When specimens will be shipped;
- How often specimens will be shipped;
- How specimens will be shipped;
- The courier who will be transporting the specimens; and
- Any other information vital to the shipment of specimens.

For those who intend on potentially sending any samples to HETL for testing, they will also need to provide evidence that they have registered as a “submitter facility” with HETL.

In order to set up an account as a submitter facility, you need to fax the following information to (207) 287-1727:

- Facility/EMS Service Name;
- Contact name;
- Facility/EMS Service address;
- Phone number; and
- Confidential fax number.

HETL will then contact your agency with confirmation of receipt of the information.

If an agency intends on conducting swabbing and sending to labs other than Maine CDC's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) then the service will need to describe the plan for sending those samples to that laboratory as well.

Services that solely intend on supporting an existing health system's infrastructure with personnel able to conduct swabbing should indicate in this section that the logistics of specimen management will be wholly managed by that respective organization. *Please note that without a logistics plan for managing samples, your service will NOT be able to conduct swabbing outside of swabbing locations established and managed by the listed organization.*

G. Follow-Up/Results Communication Pathway

Services working exclusively with an organization that has an existing follow-up pathway should indicate that as part of the application. The service is not required to detail the existing pathway that is being provided by another regulated healthcare organization(s) (e.g. if the service is providing personnel to swab for a hospital that will then conduct all of the follow-up). *It should be noted that these programs will also be required to complete the MEFIRS abbreviated run form discussed in the online education found on MEMSEd for each individual swabbed.*

Otherwise, services must address the following items in this section:

- Detail the pathway by which the service will contact individuals regarding their swabbing results. *Services authorized to conduct swabbing will be required to contact all individuals from whom they obtain a sample and notify them of their results.*
- Individuals conducting swabbing under this authorization will need to complete an abbreviated run form within MEFIRS for each individual which will allow for the collection of the necessary information to be able to contact individuals once your service has received the results of the test. Training on how to use this run form has been incorporated into the required COVID-19 Swabbing Training.
- The algorithm, authorized by the service's/program's medical director, by which the service intends on notify individuals of positive results including, but not limited to:
 - Who will be making the phone calls and their training;
 - Resources that can be offered to those receiving results. Resources should include, but not be limited to, home care instructions, return to care instructions, when to come off quarantine or who to contact to come out of quarantine, when to follow-up with a primary care physician (PCP), who to follow-up with in the event the individual does not have a PCP, and guidance on how to quarantine. These documents can be sourced from the U.S. or Maine CDC; however, they must be adapted for the service in question regarding their notification plan and should be readily available as part of the communications pathway. And
 - The referral system that can be shared for the patients to receive additional resources or medical care, if needed.

In the event that HETL or another lab utilized by the service is able to send results directly to the individual in the future, services will also need to allocate a pathway by

which they can obtain consent at the time of specimen collection to do so. This will likely be captured within the MEFIRS system for samples sent to HETL.

H. Training Plan

Services must develop a training plan by which they will ensure that all individuals conducting swabbing as part of their service have completed the online Maine EMS COVID-19 Swabbing Training on MEMSEd and can demonstrate proficient psychomotor competency. Maine EMS has developed a psychomotor competency check-off form that will be available for download after clinicians have completed the online didactic component of the MEMSEd training. The form should be completed by another licensed clinician that is authorized to conduct swabbing who is able to directly observe the clinician conducting the swabbing properly. This form will need to be updated to their MEMSEd course for it to be marked completed, receive a certificate, and be awarded the continuing education hours. The pathway and persons authorized to complete these forms should be established in direct consultation with the medical director affiliated with this program. Services conducting stand-alone swabbing sites must develop a plan to ensure that at all times at least one member of the swabbing team at each swabbing site has completed a COVID-19 contact tracing course. It is important that members of the swabbing team can refer individuals who are being swabbed and/or presenting with symptoms to trained team member for additional patient education regarding contact tracing and guidance, if needed. Free courses are available online from a variety of resources including Johns Hopkins University via www.coursera.com.

I. Quality Assurance/Improvement Plan

Develop an independent quality assurance and improvement plan for their swabbing program. This plan will be designed to maintaining consistency and accuracy in swabbing as well as follow-up encounters with individuals. The plan must account for a review of any specimens that are rejected from HETL, or other labs, to ensure compliance with all state and federal guidelines regarding swabbing. This plan should also include provisions for when temperature logs will be reviewed if the service is going to be responsible for managing the specimen logistics. Services should anticipate keeping these logs for at least six (6) months following the last reading recorded in the log.

J. Medical Director Review

Services must partner with a licensed physician (MD/DO) medical director who is licensed in the State of Maine and their license is in good standing. The medical director will be responsible for:

- Reviewing the swabbing program and ensuring its compliance with local, state, and federal requirements;
- Attesting that they have reviewed the plans that were submitted as part of this application; and
- Serving as the medical director for this service's swabbing program.

Their signature is required on Medical Director for EMS Swabbing Program Attestation Form, Appendix A. It should then be uploaded for this section.

Appendix A

Medical Director for EMS Swabbing Program Attestation Form

EMS Agency Name: _____

I, _____, do hereby certify that I agree to serve as the medical director for the above listed agency's COVID-19 swabbing program. By signing this form, I attest that I have reviewed the materials that this agency has submitted to become an authorized COVID-19 swabbing service and I agree to actively participate in the education and quality assurance/improvement processes. I understand that this agency may receive clinical lab results for individuals that are positive for COVID-19 and I have reviewed the patient education materials as well as the algorithm that the agency intends to use during the notification process. Based on my clinical experience as a licensed physician, I believe that this agency's plan adequately addresses all aspects of the application process including, but not limited to: types of swabbing, program affiliations, patient interactions, PPE supply chain sustainability, specimen logistics, follow-up/result communications, training, and quality assurance/improvement. I also attest that I am a qualified and duly licensed clinician within the State of Maine.

Name (Printed): _____

Maine Medical License Number: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____