



Broad Institute COVID-19 Rapid Testing Pilot Program in Cambridge Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living Facilities

Updated: April 14, 2020

OVERVIEW

How did the Broad Institute and City of Cambridge partnership come about?

The Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT approached the Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) and offered to manage and conduct COVID-19 surveillance testing of all residents, health care workers, and staff at skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities in Cambridge.

Why is this program being launched in Cambridge skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities?

The risk associated with COVID-19 to residents in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities is extremely high. While the Cambridge Public Health Department expects that skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities in Cambridge are following Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidelines (found [here](#)) and/or best practices, staff at these facilities are under intense pressure at this time.

Rapid testing for all patients/residents, health care workers, and staff will provide timely information about COVID-19 status that skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities are currently unable to obtain due to limited availability of testing. Surveillance testing at this time is critical for the continued control and prevention of COVID-19 at these facilities where many residents are at high risk for serious illness and death from COVID-19.

What is the benefit of conducting surveillance testing?

Surveillance testing, which is what this pilot project is undertaking, is a different approach from how most COVID-19 testing is currently being conducted in the United States at this time. Under the surveillance approach, everyone in a given population—in this case, those who live and work in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities—is tested for COVID-19, regardless of whether they have symptoms or feel ill.

This approach will provide a more accurate picture of the true infection rate in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities at a given point in time. By testing an entire population of facility patients/residents and workers, regardless of symptoms, the Cambridge Public Health Department and state partners can move quickly to isolate residents. The goal of rapid identification of positive cases is to break the chain of transmission in these facilities and ultimately reduce the number of people who become infected.

119 Windsor Street

Cambridge, MA 02139

Phone: 617.665.3800 | Fax: 617.665.3888

www.cambridgepublichealth.org



Who is conducting the tests?

The Broad Institute has procured testing supplies and conducted a brief “train the trainers” program for testing process, packaging/labeling, and delivery procedures for Pro EMS field staff. Each screening day is being conducted by three teams of six field providers plus a team leader all in appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by Pro EMS. Samples are being transported to the Broad Institute for testing in their laboratory.

TESTING & PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Will the Broad Institute publicly report the number of positive tests in these facilities?

The Broad Institute will share the testing data with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Cambridge Public Health Department.

As test results become available for facility residents, health care workers, and staff, the Cambridge Public Health Department will post a daily case count on the city’s COVID-19 data web page: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/covid19/casecount>. This information will be provided in aggregate for all skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities in Cambridge.

Will you break out the positive tests for nursing homes and assisted living facilities?

At this time, the Cambridge Public Health Department is not planning to share data by facility type.

Is a breakdown available of the number of positive cases at each of the seven facilities?

No. At this time, the Cambridge Public Health Department is not planning to share data by individual facility.

When will the second round of testing take place?

The Broad Institute plans on conducting a second round of testing at the end of this week (week of April 13).

What are the next steps to protect patients/residents and workers?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has been alerted about the test results. The Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) is working with the facilities to provide guidance on “cohorting” patients, which means putting those who have tested positive together and those who have tested negative together and apart from the

positive cases. CPHD is also providing strategies for crisis staffing as guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

If I have family in one of these facilities, can I get tested?

The pilot will test only residents/patients, staff, and health care workers at these facilities.

If a healthcare worker or staff member at one of these facilities tests positive, will their family members be tested?

Anyone who tests positive will be given medical instruction appropriate to their condition and in accordance with public health recommendations. Family (or other household) members of a worker who has tested positive for COVID-19 should monitor their own health and call their health care provider if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, sore throat, loss of sense of smell, cough, and/or shortness of breath).

If this testing capacity exists, why can't people in Cambridge who are symptomatic get tested?

This project is focused on skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities because COVID-19 poses a high risk of serious illness and death to people living in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities, and can spread easily among residents and staff at these institutions.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19—which include fever, sore throat, loss of sense of smell, cough, and/or shortness of breath—call your healthcare provider and tell them about your symptoms and your exposure. They will decide whether you need to be tested.

If you are not able to get tested, but believe you may have COVID-19, take the same precautions as if you tested positive. Those precautions can be found here: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/covid19/publichealth>.

Could this program be expanded elsewhere in Cambridge, such as at the War Memorial Temporary Emergency Shelter?

While the COVID-19 rapid testing program is currently only being piloted at Cambridge skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities, the City of Cambridge has put in place a number of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the War Memorial temporary emergency shelter. This includes separating residents in quarantine who are awaiting test results and transporting any residents who test positive to a separate state-run location. Additionally, all residents of the Field House at the temporary emergency shelter are screened prior to entering. The screening includes a series of questions regarding symptoms, as well as a temperature check.