



October 18, 2024

Dear Laboratory Manager:

The 2024-2025 influenza surveillance season has begun. The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) monitors the activity of influenza and other respiratory viruses year-round. Information is obtained from a variety of sources: influenza test results from clinical laboratories, emergency department visits, institutional outbreaks, influenza-related outpatient visits, and influenza-related death certificate data. In addition, volunteer sentinel providers throughout the Commonwealth submit specimens to the PA DOH Bureau of Laboratories (BOL- state public health laboratory) throughout the year. Your participation in influenza virologic surveillance was immensely important during the past season. It will be equally important during the current influenza season, particularly as it is expected to overlap with the increased activity of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

We would like your assistance in enhancing our surveillance this season. For this purpose, we are requesting that each clinical laboratory site that is performing influenza testing with a Universal or Viral Transport Media (UTM/VTM) collection system submit two samples to the PA DOH BOL biweekly from October 2024 to May 2025.

The specimen submission form is available at [BOL Specimen Submission Form.pdf \(pa.gov\)](#). Shipping instructions (including courier services) are included below.

Reporting and submitting positive influenza specimens to PA DOH:

1. Send two positive influenza (A and B) specimens biweekly during the season as described above.
 - a. Fill out the submission form, and order "Influenza Surveillance" on the form.
 - b. Include your results and method on the form (bottom left corner).
2. Continue to report all positive influenza antigen, nucleic acid, and culture test results to PA-NEDSS per PA's reportable disease regulations.
3. If subtyping is performed in your lab and influenza A is "**subtype negative**," report and submit to the PA DOH BOL immediately. To be considered "**subtype negative**," the specimen must meet **both** of the following criteria:
 - a. Test for influenza A was positive, **and**
 - b. Subtyping was performed, and A/H3, A/H1 or A/H1pdm09 (2009) was not detected (subtype negative). Provide information about the platform or method you are using for "**subtype negative**" specimens.

To submit a "**subtype negative**" influenza A virus specimen, call the PA DOH BOL at 484-870-6380. Store the clinical specimen until shipping arrangements are complete. BOL will conduct further testing immediately to rule out a drifted or novel influenza strain.

Reporting to the National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS):

Reporting your aggregate numbers of weekly non-influenza respiratory virus testing results is of paramount importance to public health. NREVSS is a laboratory-based system that monitors temporal and geographic circulation patterns (patterns occurring in time and place) of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), human parainfluenza viruses (HPIV), human metapneumovirus (HMPV), and respiratory adenoviruses. This program is housed and managed by the CDC; however, the aggregate data are accessible by PA DOH. Participating U.S. laboratories voluntarily report aggregate counts to CDC every week, including the total number of non-influenza respiratory virus tests performed that week (by virus), and the total number of positive test results for each virus. To register and start submitting your data, please complete the registration form at: <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/nrevss/register/lab.aspx>

Your contributions to this important public health effort play a significant role in state and global influenza surveillance.

Thank you,

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