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To: Commercial and Private Laboratories
From: Office of Disease Control
Date: May 1, 2024
Subject: Private and Commercial Testing for Measles

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has become aware of commercial and private laboratories, such as those within hospital settings, that are onboarding measles RT-PCR testing in-house. Commercial testing for measles presents many challenges for public health with regard to case investigations, contact tracing, and delivery of timely post-exposure prophylaxis. Submission of specimens to IDPH Public Health Laboratories is also required in the Communicable Disease Code ([Section 690.100](#)). Because of this, IDPH needs to ensure laboratories are aware of the potential consequences and requirements prior to onboarding any new measles PCR testing.

According to [Section 690.520 of the Illinois Communicable Disease Code](#), **suspect, probable or confirmed measles cases are reportable by telephone immediately, within three (3) hours, upon initial clinical suspicion.** This means healthcare providers and facilities need to immediately report suspect measles cases to their [local health department](#), or to IDPH. **It is crucial to protect the public and that these cases be reported at earliest clinical suspicion and/or at the point testing is requested. Laboratories should not wait on laboratory confirmation or rely on laboratory reporting.** Delays in reporting likely will result in avoidable exposures as well as missed [post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\)](#) options for non-immune close contacts.

IDPH Chicago and Springfield laboratories provide measles RT-PCR testing of throat or nasopharyngeal swabs **at no cost to the patient or provider.** It is recommended that testing of suspect measles cases be conducted at the state lab. Positive measles specimens determined to be positive because of recent vaccination must be further characterized by public health laboratories. Testing performed at commercial laboratories can cause delays in providing testing results, delay vaccine-strain specific testing, and can delay the overall public health response if the case is positive (see [instructions for submission](#)).

If a health care provider or facility is unable to reach their local health department after-hours, they can call IEMA at 217-782-7860 to reach someone at IDPH.

cc: IDPH Office of Health Care Regulation
IDPH Division of Laboratories