

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Expanded Testing Capacity and Robust Contact Tracing Plan for New Jersey

05/12/2020

TRENTON – As outlined in his vision, “The Road Back: Restoring Economic Health Through Public Health,” Governor Phil Murphy today announced a comprehensive strategy to expand testing capacity and implement a robust contact tracing program for New Jersey.

“Implementing an expanded testing regime and robust contact tracing strategy are the underpinnings of putting New Jersey on the road back to recovery,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Public health creates economic health and today’s plan will give our residents and business owners confidence that the state is prepared to move forward strategically and responsibly.”

TESTING

A flexible testing plan that is accessible to all residents who need it is a critical piece of restarting New Jersey’s economy. New Jersey will implement the following strategies to expand capacity and access to testing:

Capacity

New Jersey will double its testing capacity and increase to at least 20,000 tests per day by the end of May. This capacity will be built out moving forward with a minimum of 25,000 tests completed per day by the end of June. Currently, there are 135 public and privately-operated specimen collection sites statewide. In addition to the recently announced 11 Rite Aid locations, CVS will have swab-and-send testing capabilities at 50 of their stores across New Jersey by the end of the month.

Priority

The state will prioritize access to testing for vulnerable populations, including residents in long-term care facilities and developmental centers, individuals in the corrections system, those in homeless shelters, patients in psychiatric hospitals, and seasonal farmworkers. The state testing program will also ensure ready access for frontline health care workers, first responders, and transit workers.

Community

The statewide testing plan will also utilize mobile testing units to directly serve communities of color, which have been disproportionately ravaged by COVID-19. Testing sites will also open within institutions of faith including churches, synagogues, and mosques.

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Executive Directives

The Department of Health is issuing an Executive Directive that will require long-term care facilities to supplement or amend their current disease outbreak plan to include a COVID-19 testing plan for all staff and patients/residents. The directive requires baseline testing of staff and patients/residents completed by or before May 26, 2020, retesting of individuals who test negative within 3-7 days after baseline testing, and further retesting in accordance with Centers for Disease Control guidance. All long-term care facilities must confirm that they have updated their outbreak prevention plan to meet this directive by May 19.

The Department of Health is also issuing a standing order permitting testing for COVID-19 without a prescription for New Jersey residents who may have been exposed and meet certain conditions.

CONTACT TRACING

Implementing a robust contact tracing program is a key mechanism to break the chain of transmission and slow community spread for individuals who have come into contact with those infected by COVID-19. New Jersey will implement the following strategies to build a comprehensive contact tracing program:

Technology

To aid in the contact tracing effort, New Jersey will implement a statewide solution to leverage technological data to increase efficiency and streamline workflow and communication. New Jersey will work with Dimagi to install its digital CommCare platform to create a centralized database with uniform reporting requirements for contact tracing efforts across the state.

Executive Action

To bolster the efforts of local health departments and ensure that the contact tracing program works seamlessly between all levels of government throughout the state, Governor Murphy today signed Executive Order No. 141 (<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-141.pdf>) mandating that all local, county, and regional health departments use the CommCare platform to support their contact tracing efforts. The Commissioner of the Department of Health will determine appropriate timing for this requirement. This coordinated regional approach will ensure support, training, oversight, and an accurate and centralized statewide database. The state will bear the cost of this technology platform.

Partnership

To centralize and expand our efforts, we will build a robust Community Contact Tracing Corps and augment the approximately 800-900 contact tracers on the ground, the state will need at least an additional 1,000 dedicated contact tracers. To jumpstart recruitment efforts, New Jersey will partner with the state's colleges and universities to employ public health, social work, and related students as frontline workers. The New Jersey Department of Health will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Rutgers School of Public Health to stand up the first tranche of this new contact tracing workforce.

Workforce

In order to further grow the ranks of contact tracers and create jobs for New Jerseyans, the state will seek to partner with an organization to work as a Contact Tracing Deployment Provider to assist with hiring, onboarding, and managing contact tracers throughout the state. Interested vendors and organizations can access more information, review the draft Request for Quotes, and submit questions and feedback at <https://covid19.nj.gov/CTRFQ> (<https://covid19.nj.gov/CTRFQ>). Additionally, individuals interested in becoming contact tracers, may register their interest at covid19.nj.gov/tracers.

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