



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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Seven Bay Area Jurisdictions Order Laboratories Testing for COVID-19 to Report More Comprehensive Testing Data to State and Local Authorities

High Quality Data Essential for Combatting the Spread of COVID-19

Martinez, CA – Seven Bay Area jurisdictions are taking a unified, regional step to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

On March 24, the Public Health Officers of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara, with the City of Berkeley, announced an order with new reporting requirements for laboratories that test for the novel coronavirus. Laboratories must report results of tests for all residents of each jurisdiction to the ordering health care provider and the appropriate state and local health officials.

Currently, labs report only positive results, making it difficult for public health officials to know how many people are being tested overall. The new order requires laboratories to report all positive, negative, and inconclusive results, and information that allows health officials to better locate the person tested. The more comprehensive information will improve health officials' understanding of the rates of infection and the location of possible infection clusters.

Growing availability of testing through commercial and academic laboratories expands the overall testing capacity beyond small, specialized public health laboratories. The public health laboratory network offers only limited testing for emerging infections such as COVID-19 as other commercial and academic laboratory sectors come on-line. Because of the limited capacity of public health laboratories and the absence of further reporting requirements of private laboratories, the current percentage of cases that are detected through testing is important, but reflects only a small portion of the total number of people infected in our jurisdictions.

"This order will ensure public health officials regionally and across the state have access to the information we need to understand, predict, and combat the spread of COVID-19," said Dr. Sara Cody, Santa Clara County Health Officer. "Commercial



and academic laboratories are important partners in providing testing to our community. Receiving this critical information from those labs will help local health departments respond to COVID-19 during this unprecedented time.”

The laboratory reporting order follows new data of increasing local transmission of COVID-19, including 930 confirmed cases with 19 deaths shared by the seven jurisdictions. The Bay Area’s total count of 930 confirmed COVID-19 cases is more than half of California’s case count. This does not account for the rapidly increasing number of assumed cases of community transmission.

“Expanding reporting beyond positive results to include timely reporting of negative and inconclusive results allows local health officials to better understand whether there are areas of the community that are experiencing more intense transmission and project future trends in the spread of the virus,” said Dr. Tomás Aragón, Health Officer, City & County of San Francisco. “By sharing high quality test result data at scale, state and local health authorities can better track COVID-19, predict its spread, and better focus public resources to end this global pandemic.”

For more information about COVID-19 activities in these areas, [Alameda](#), [Contra Costa](#), [Marin](#), [Santa Clara](#), [San Francisco](#), [San Mateo](#), or [Berkeley](#) COVID-19 websites.

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