**Talking Points**

**Point-of-Care Antigen Tests in SNFs**

**Background:**

On July 14, CMS [announced](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/07/14/trump-administration-announces-initiative-more-faster-covid-19-testing-nursing-homes.html) an initiative to distribute of point-of-care (POC) antigen COVID-19 testing devices to nursing homes across the country. Nursing facilities will receive one of two testing devices:

* Quidel Sofia 2 SARS Antigen FIA
* BD Veritor System for Rapid Detection of SARS-CoV-2

**Talking Points**

* The ability to frequently test residents and staff and receive reliable, rapid results is paramount. With rapid results, long term care providers can better identify who has the virus and make tactical decisions to protect residents and staff.
* (as of 8/18/20): Distribution is currently being prioritized to roughly 2,500 nursing homes in hot spots right now, and we believe most have received their devices. HHS may be able to provide an update on the status of these shipments.
* We appreciate that the Administration is focusing on these nursing homes most in need due to community spread and look forward to working with them and private industry to address ongoing needs, such as supplies and guidance. We look forward to working with CMS and HHS to further expand this program.
* We recognize that HHS and the companies are doing their best to ramp up production to help with reordering test kits, but until adequate supplies are established, providers will need to continue to rely on PCR testing once the initial shipment of test kits runs out.
* In July, our [survey](https://www.ahcancal.org/News/news_releases/Documents/AHCA-NCAL-Survey-Testing-Results.pdf) found that 87% of providers said it was taking two days or longer to get results back from lab companies. We need the public and private sector to band together and rally around our nursing homes and assisted living communities to ensure ongoing support with adequate supplies, reliable tests and rapid results.

 *Questions around false negatives/states not allowing the use of these tests:*

* We are currently advising providers to follow their state and local public health guidelines and requirements for use of these tests.
* CDC has released guidance that indicates it is appropriate to use these antigen test devices as a screening tool in a nursing home, so we are hopeful that state health departments will also recognize their use.
* CMS and HHS recognized that providers will have many questions, but they did not want to delay in getting this program started and will be providing more guidance in the coming weeks. We appreciate the federal government distributing these tests and hope they will soon address such questions.

*Related Stories (On Background):*

**Trump nursing home plan limits supply of free COVID-19 tests**
<https://apnews.com/267eb99ba143f39d9d51dee32f0512a8>

**Error Rates on Rapid Covid-19 Tests Put Nursing Homes on Edge**
“After the Food and Drug Administration issued to Quidel its first-ever emergency use authorization for an antigen test in May, FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn warned that ‘negative results do not rule out infection. With this in mind, negative results from an antigen test may need to be confirmed with a PCR test prior to making treatment decisions or to prevent the possible spread of the virus due to a false negative.’”
<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/health-law-and-business/error-rates-on-rapid-covid-19-tests-put-nursing-homes-on-edge>

**Feds to send COVID tests to nursing homes, but can California really use them?**
State health officials were caught off guard by the federal government’s plan, as the tests are less accurate and may be of limited use in California’s nursing homes
<https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/california/covid-tests-nursing-homes/103-18633a6f-1837-4768-a877-0aae8dda30d9>

**HHS Sent Rapid Testing Machines To Nursing Homes Without Direction, Resulting In Mass Confusion**
<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/muckraker/hhs-sent-rapid-testing-machines-to-nursing-homes-without-direction-resulting-in-mass-confusion>