Dear Clinician and Health Care Partners:

We in the public health department appreciate all you are doing to care for our community. We have been working 24/7 since January to respond to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation. We are continuously monitoring CDC and CDPH guidance about COVID-19, as well as the commercial development of tests. Today we wish to provide you with concise information about testing for COVID-19.

We currently have NO cases of COVID-19 in Mendocino County (meaning no positive CDC confirmed tests). Two patients have met criteria for testing and have been tested since Friday March 6: one by the Public Health Department has come back as negative; the other result from a private clinic using a commercial test is still in process. Previous to Friday, no patients had risk factors plus symptoms that qualified them for testing per the CDC guidance in place at that time.

Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC) has shared information with us that of all of the 14 PHC counties, only Solano County is showing community spread. In other words, all cases in these 14 counties (except Solano) are directly related to high-risk travel or to close contact with a COVID-19 case. In communities with no evidence of community spread such as ours, the emphasis is on continued containment strategies. We have been actively following COVID-19 containment strategies, using CDC and CDPH guidance since early January.

On Friday, March 6, commercial testing became available to clinicians through Quest and LabCorp. The protocols for utilizing these commercial tests should be developed by clinics and hospitals in accordance with the CDC guidance regarding clinical criteria for COVID-19 testing. These criteria change frequently, so please review this site daily for updates. The most recent (03/07/2020) CDC criteria for testing for COVID-19 can be found at the link below:

The current guidance from the CDC (on the link above) is:

“Clinicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Decisions on which patients receive testing should be based on the local epidemiology of COVID-19, as well as the clinical course of illness. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing). Clinicians are strongly encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness, including infections such as influenza.

Epidemiologic factors that may help guide decisions on whether to test include: any persons, including healthcare workers, who have had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset, or a history of travel from affected geographic areas (China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan, Egypt) within 14 days of symptom onset.”

Of note from the CDC website: a PUI (Person Under Investigation) is an epidemiological term for an individual who is being tested for COVID-19 by Public Health and is on isolation until their results come back and it is determined if they are positive for disease (at which time they become a “Case”).

At this time, there are two available means of testing in our county: Commercial labs (Quest or LabCorp) or through Public Health (testing is done at the Sonoma County Public Health lab). Both means require the clinician to obtain samples as directed by the lab, using proper PPE. Both testing options take from 24-72 hours to be resulted. Please use a commercial lab if possible, as the process is much less complex.

If you wish to utilize Public Health COVID-19 testing:

1) This requires contacting the Health Officer to approve of the testing, obtain a PUI number from CDC, and a public health courier to take the sample, once collected by your clinician, to the Sonoma Public Health labs during business hours. Contact our Communicable Disease (CD) department during business hours at (707)472-2717 (8 am - 5pm) if you wish to request public health testing. In an emergency to reach the Health Officer call REDCOM at 707-568-5992.

We require that any clinician who orders the COVID-19 test from a commercial source such as Quest or LabCorp inform the Mendocino County Communicable Diseases Department about the patient so we can have situational awareness using a CMR form faxed to (707)472-2714. For any questions about this process, please call our CD department at (707) 472-2717 during business hours.

Any person tested for COVID-19, whether by a commercial or public health lab, must be on home or hospital isolation until the test results are available. If the test result is positive, the person becomes a COVID-19 CASE and must be immediately reported to the Public Health Officer by phone and maintained in ISOLATION. The close personal contacts of this individual should practice social
distancing until the test results are back, and if they develop symptoms, they should also be tested. Social distancing includes staying home from work or school; wearing a surgical mask when around other people; and staying away from any congregant setting such as markets.

Actions Requested of Healthcare Professionals considering COVID-19 testing:

1. **Screen** for travel history on all patients with potentially infectious disease, especially those with fever and acute respiratory illness. Place visible signage requesting visitors with a fever and recent travel to China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan or Egypt or on a high risk cruise ship (such as Grand Princess) to notify a hospital staff member.

2. **Immediately isolate** patients reporting fever (>100.4°F or >38°C) AND lower respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) AND travel to China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan or Egypt or on a cruise ship within 14 days prior to illness.
   a. Place surgical mask on patient and place patient in private room with door closed (optimally, a negative-pressure, airborne isolation room).
   b. Implement all of the infection control procedures listed below for healthcare workers who will come into close contact with the patient:
      - Standard precautions **AND**
      - Contact precautions (gloves, gown) **AND**
      - Airborne precautions (N95 mask or PAPR) **AND**
      - Eye protection (face shield or goggles)

3. **Identify** patients who may have respiratory illness caused by COVID-19. A flowchart (example from CDC included at link below) can be posted in your facility and shared with colleagues.