Rapid COVID-19 Testing for Providers in Group Homes for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Test administered in the provider-managed setting by a trained staff member using a shallow nasal swab

NEW CASTLE (January 21, 2021) – The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) in partnership with the Division of Public Health (DPH) is bringing a rapid COVID-19 testing program to group homes, day programs and other provider-managed settings in Delaware that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Beginning this month, Delaware provider agencies serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have access to rapid antigen testing kits that detect active COVID-19 virus in 15 minutes.

“These testing kits are going to be a very welcomed resource to our provider community,” said Cory Nourie, Director of Community Services for DDDS. “Many of the individuals we support across the state have underlying health conditions that make them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. But they also rely on the close contact and care provided to them daily by their direct support professionals and can’t always benefit from the standard tools of mask wearing and social distancing that others rely upon for staying safe. We’ve been waiting for a tool like this to be available, and I’m so excited we now have it for our provider network.”

Dr. Rick Pescatore, Chief Physician for the Division of Public Health, said, “During the pandemic, the state has been working to increase access to fast, accurate testing options. We all know that the sooner we can identify an individual as COVID positive, the sooner we can begin the process of isolation and contact tracing to minimize the spread of this terrible disease.”

“Getting access to rapid antigen testing is exactly what we were looking for and its use in the group home and congregate settings is a smart way to use this tool,” Pescatore added. “We’re excited to see this get out into the field and to see what impact it can have.”

The test is administered in the provider-managed setting by a trained staff member using a shallow nasal swab and a couple of drops of indicator, that when combined, provide a result in 15 minutes. Participating providers are able to test their direct support professionals on-site and identify asymptomatic COVID-19 positive individuals. This, in conjunction with the other safety precautions already in place, will provide an added level of protection and assistance in mitigating the spread to vulnerable Delawareans. Individuals testing positive will be required to isolate at home and obtain a PCR COVID test through Curative to confirm the rapid test. They will not return to work until they provide a negative PCR result or have completed their isolation period.

“The rapid test gives us one more option for ensuring the safety of service recipients and staff until we can bring the COVID-19 vaccine to everyone,” Nourie said.

The Rapid Antigen Tests are provided by Delaware’s State Health Operations Center. Providers interested in testing must obtain a CLIA waiver, a federally mandated waiver that allows laboratory testing to be performed outside of a traditional laboratory setting. Once the waiver has been obtained, and staff have been trained by DPH, testing kits are delivered directly

from the State to providers.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) has more than 5,000 service recipients statewide, including 1,270 who receive residential habilitation services in group homes and similar community-based settings.