March 6, 2020

State of Alabama
Press Release: Public Health, Alabama Department of

ADPH state laboratory now tests for novel coronavirus COVID-19

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Karen Landers, M.D.
(256) 383-1231

Effective March 5, the Alabama Department of Public Health Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) began conducting SARS-CoV-2 testing. Physicians are asked to refer to the Health Alert Network (HAN) sent out today for specific testing criteria and are required to call ADPH for consultation if the patient meets the criteria based on specific epidemiologic exposures for COVID-19 infection.

In addition to the criteria for testing by BCL provided in the HAN Alert, guidance is also available at the following link: alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/cov-healthcare.html

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said, “While the risk of this new Coronavirus disease remains low in Alabama, we have been working diligently to prepare for any cases that may occur. We are providing education about our recommendations in coordination with other groups.”

If the patient does not meet the criteria, healthcare providers are encouraged to contact larger commercial laboratories where they normally refer specimens to determine if that laboratory can perform SARS-CoV-2 testing. There are a number of other respiratory viruses causing respiratory illnesses in Alabama including several common types of Coronaviruses, Rhinoviruses, and several types of flu viruses. It is important that testing for these viruses occur. Other testing should be sent to commercial laboratories from the healthcare provider.

ADPH continues to work with the CDC and other agencies to provide guidance regarding COVID-19 as more is learned. To help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses including COVID-19, the following normal precautions are recommended:

- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers if handwashing is not possible.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when sick.
- Stay away from people who are sick.

Visit alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/2019-coronavirus.html for more COVID-19 information.

-30-

3/6/20