



**OKLAHOMA**

# This is an official Oklahoma Health Alert

## Network Health Notification

Date June 22, 2021

OKHAN\_345-2021-06-22-ADV-N

Reference: N/A

### **Variant Surveillance Submissions to Oklahoma State Department of Health Public Health Laboratory for SARS-CoV-2 Positive Samples**

#### **Summary:**

As COVID-19 evolves and new variants of the virus continue to emerge it is important the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) receive COVID-19 specimens to identify variant trends and implement mitigation measures to prevent the continued spread of COVID-19 in Oklahoma. The OSDH PHL now has the capacity to sequence positive COVID-19 specimens from across the state. Since PCR positive COVID-19 test volume is currently low, the OSDH Acute Disease Service (ADS) and PHL are requesting your partnership in COVID-19 sequencing surveillance by encouraging facilities to submit their COVID-19 PCR positive specimens to the PHL for sequencing to increase the ability to monitor for COVID-19 variants across the state.

For any questions, please contact the Acute Disease Service Epidemiologist on call (24/7/365) at 405-426-8710. You may also call the Public Health Lab at 405-564-7750.

**## This message has been distributed to Primary Care and Infectious Disease Physicians, Family Medicine Physicians, Obstetrics, Pediatricians, Pulmonologists, Infection Preventionists, Laboratorians, Urgent Care Centers, Emergency Departments, and State and Local Health Officials ##**

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Acute Disease Service (ADS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

#### **Categories of Health Alert messages:**

##### **Health Alert**

Provides vital, time-sensitive information for a specific incident or situation; warrants immediate action or attention by health officials, laboratorians, clinicians, and members of the public and conveys the highest level of importance.

##### **Health Advisory**

Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; contains recommendations or actionable items to be performed by public health officials, laboratorians, and/or clinicians; may not require immediate action.

##### **Health Update**

Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate attention.

##### **Health Info/Event**

Provides general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

Message #: OK-HAN\_345 / Reference: n/a

Oklahoma State Department of Health / Acute Disease Service / 123 S Robert S Kerr Ave, Oklahoma City, OK 73102  
405-426-8710 (ph) / 405-271-6680 (fax) <http://ads.health.ok.gov>

*June 21, 2021*

As COVID-19 evolves and new variants of the virus continue to emerge it is important the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) receive COVID-19 specimens to identify variant trends and implement mitigation measures to prevent the continued spread of COVID-19 in Oklahoma. The OSDH PHL now has the capacity to sequence positive COVID-19 specimens from across the state. Since PCR positive COVID-19 test volume is currently low, the OSDH Acute Disease Service (ADS) and PHL are requesting your partnership in COVID-19 sequencing surveillance by encouraging facilities to submit their COVID-19 PCR positive specimens to the PHL for sequencing to increase the ability to monitor for COVID-19 variants across the state.

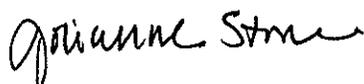
This proposed partnership would have three main public health impacts:

1. Improved monitoring for variant cases among fully vaccinated individuals. Several of the Variants of Concern (VOC) and Variants of Interest (VOI) have known or potential reduced neutralization by post-vaccination sera.
2. Improved variant surveillance at a regional level so healthcare providers are able to make informed decisions about monoclonal antibody treatment for patients who qualify. Several of the VOCs and VOIs have known or potential reduced neutralization by some EUA monoclonal antibody treatments.
3. Improved response time to clusters and outbreaks of rare VOCs and VOIs. Several of the VOCs and VOIs have known or potential increased transmission.

We appreciate your consideration of participation in this partnership and look forward to receiving specimens from your facility in order to better protect the health of Oklahomans. Information regarding the submission process is attached, and participating facilities should send an e-mail of their willingness to participate along with the facility/laboratory name, point of contact name, and point of contact phone number to Vanessa Grimaldo at [Vanessa.Grimaldo@health.ok.gov](mailto:Vanessa.Grimaldo@health.ok.gov).

Thank you again for your dedication and willingness to prevent spread of COVID-19 in Oklahoma.

Sincerely,



*Jolianne Stone, MPH  
State Epidemiologist  
Oklahoma State Department of Health*

## Variant Surveillance Submissions to Oklahoma State Department of Health Public Health Laboratory for SARS-CoV-2 Positive Samples

- 1) OSDH-PHL will accept SARS-CoV-2 positive samples based on the guidance and processes below. Please reference the 4 tabs in the attached **Supplementary Forms**:
  - Instructions
  - Example of the required printed manifest
  - Required Supplementary Form
  - FAQ
- 2) Please have all SARS-CoV-2 positive samples ready for standard courier pick-up on Mondays or Thursdays.
- 3) Acceptable specimen types for sequencing and potential virus characterization are the same as for the CDC SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic assays that were authorized by FDA under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA): upper and lower respiratory specimens, including nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal, nasal mid-turbinate, and anterior nares (nasal swab) specimens. Additionally, a nasopharyngeal wash/aspirate or nasal wash/aspirate specimen collected by a healthcare professional is acceptable, as is a naturally expectorated sputum. Acceptable specimens will be limited to those collected in media that allow for viral culture (e.g., PBS, VTM). **Specimens collected in Hologic Aptima buffer and Molecular Transport Media are excluded from submission.** For more information, see the interim specimen collection guidelines (available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>).
- 4) Considerations for selecting Variant Surveillance specimens:
  - a. Sequencing and virus culture success are limited by the quality of the specimen. Ideally specimens should have an RT-PCR Ct value of  $\leq 30$ . If Ct values are not available, specimens that are positive for SARS-CoV-2 by another testing modality may be sent.
  - b. To avoid duplication of sequence data submitted to public databases, we do not accept specimens that have been previously submitted to other facilities for sequencing.
  - c. Once collected, specimens can be stored at 2–8°C for no more than 96 hours. The 96-hour timeframe is a strict requirement for sequencing to be completed. After the 96-hour timeframe, samples must be frozen at  $\leq -70^{\circ}\text{C}$  and shipped on dry ice.
  - d. Please submit original clinical specimens with at least 800 $\mu\text{L}$  volume. Sequencing and virus culture success are limited by the quantity and quality of the specimen.
- 5) Each sample must be labeled with a unique identifier or the Original Submitter Specimen ID.
- 6) Samples should be packaged and shipped as Category B infectious substances, and all requirements for proper packaging and shipping should be observed.
- 7) Please include a copy of the printed manifest of your samples with your shipment.
- 8) Email the required *Supplementary Forms* to [publichealthlab@health.ok.gov](mailto:publichealthlab@health.ok.gov)
  - a. Epidemiology data included in Supplementary Form: \*required
    - Sample ID\*
    - First Name\*
    - Last Name\*
    - Date of Birth\*
    - City, State, Zip\*
    - Collection Date\*
    - Vaccine Breakthrough
    - Outbreak Testing
    - Ethnicity
    - Race
    - Sex
    - Address
    - Phone
- 9) PLEASE NOTE: Variant calls and consensus sequences performed by OSDH-PHL are for **surveillance information purposes only and will not be reported back to submitters or patients**. Surveillance testing using sequencing technology to identify SARS-CoV-2 genetic variants is not intended to be used for purposes of an individual’s diagnosis, prevention, treatment, or health assessment. The Public Health Departments will only use these results for public health purposes, such as contact tracing, outbreak detection, etc.