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COVID-19 Guidance for Primary Care and Outpatient Providers

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The number of confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in Ohio is low but rapidly increasing and public health experts expect the number of positive cases to expand significantly in the coming weeks and months. At the same time, Ohio and the nation are facing a dire shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), including that maintained in the national cache.

This situation warrants a unified, consistent approach and requires primary care providers and other outpatient services providers to comply with the following course of action regarding screening and treatment of potential COVID-19 patients. Please note the course of action detailed below is a revision to the guidance issued on March 11, 2020. **Telephone Consult:** Patients should be encouraged to receive a phone-based triage, which in most cases will be done by their primary care provider. Based on these phone consultations, and utilizing CDC guidance, providers will decide whether patients require an in-person assessment.

Hospital Assessment Locations Will be Coordinating the Testing:

- Temporary central assessment and testing locations are being established throughout the state of Ohio.
- Providers should contact the local hospital to which you would refer a patient for admission to learn where your community's assessment and testing location is.
- Trained primary care professionals will be at these central assessment locations to assess whether the patient should be tested, sent home or admitted to the hospital.
- Patients who present to an outpatient setting other than a central assessment and testing location and are determined to need testing for COVID-19 should be referred to the central location for testing. Providers are strongly discouraged from doing patient assessments for COVID-19 at sites other than central assessment and treatment facilities.

Testing:

- Patients with mild systems will not be tested and will return home to self-monitor.
- Patients with moderate symptoms with other risk factors should receive a test at a commercial laboratory.
- Patients with severe symptoms should be tested through hospital laboratories (if available) or the ODH laboratory and be admitted to the hospital. Test results from the ODH laboratory will be returned within 24 hours.

Why are these steps required?

- PPE is very limited (including the national cache).
- Those providers who do currently have PPE are using it at a rate that cannot be sustained.
- The need to minimize in-person interactions to the extent possible.
- The complexity and scope of the public health issues involved in mitigating this problem requires a centralized, coordinated approach.
- It is absolutely vital that hospital capacity be reserved for the sickest patients.

Please refer patients to coronavirus.ohio.gov or to 1-833-4ASKODH (1-833-427-5634) for additional information.