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## Department of Health

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

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Dear Newborn Screening Coordinators,

We have received many questions about the impact on the newborn screening process related to the COVID-19 public health crisis. Please see a list of FAQs below. As always, we are so impressed by your dedication to the families and newborns in New York State, especially during this challenging time. Please do not hesitate to reach out via phone (518-473-7552) or email ([nbsinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:nbsinfo@health.ny.gov)) if you have additional questions.

***Question: Given this public health crisis, should we still be collecting newborn screens?***

*Answer: Yes*, we understand that we are living through an unprecedented situation, but the newborn screen remains a critical tool to ensure the best health outcomes for newborns born in New York State.

***Question: How should specimens from a mother with COVID-19 be handled?***

*Answer:* Please place these specimens in a separate specimen bag. Please include a note with the specimen that the mother was positive for COVID-19. *Please affix this note on the specimen, e.g. use a sticky note, do not write it on the specimen card.*

***Question: Mothers and babies are being discharged earlier than 24 hours due to COVID-19. What should we do about the newborn screen?***

*Answer:* Please collect a specimen prior to discharge, even if the newborn is less than 24 hours old. Several of the conditions on the newborn screening panel can be identified on a < 24-hour specimen. A repeat specimen should be collected at greater than 24 hours of age. Please send the mother home with a blood collection card with instructions to have a follow-up specimen collected at the primary care physician's office and please be sure they understand why this is important. Please give mother a "For Your Baby's Health" brochure.

***Question: We cannot bring newborns back into the hospital to collect repeat specimens. What should we do with repeat requests?***

*Answer:* We are working to change the language on some of our test results from "repeat specimen required" to "repeat specimen recommended." For most borderline results and suboptimal specimens, the newborn should have a repeat collected when it becomes practical versus exposing them to a hospital setting during this time. Reports with "repeat specimen required" indicate that the newborn should have a repeat collected at the pediatrician's office as soon as possible.

**Question: Our staff is stretched very thin and finding it challenging to process all of the paperwork coming from the Newborn Screening Program – what should we do?**

*Answer:* We are adjusting our follow-up processes. You will continue to receive messages through the secure file transfer with lists of newborns that require repeat specimens. You will no longer receive requests for repeat specimens in the mail or phone call reminders for repeat specimens. We will continue to mail the parents a letter asking for primary care physician information. We will continue to mail a first request for a repeat specimen to pediatrician offices.

**Question: Our courier driver is not allowed to visit the nursery to pick up specimens. What do we do?**

*Answer:* Please do not move any of the placards. Email: [nbsinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:nbsinfo@health.ny.gov) and [alfred.zielinski2@health.ny.gov](mailto:alfred.zielinski2@health.ny.gov) information on the new location; please be specific and we will work with our contact at UPS to change your pick-up location in their system so any driver coming to your hospital will know where to find the specimen envelope(s).