Standardized COVID-19 Testing Recommendations Prior to Hospital Discharge

These recommendations pertain to acute care hospitals, as well as LTACHs, IRFs, inpatient psychiatric facilities & inpatient psychiatric units in acute care hospitals, or any other facility licensed as a hospital discharging patients to a post-acute care setting. These recommendations are informed by the work of MHA's Post-Acute Transitions of Care & Emergency Preparedness (PATCEP) and Case Management Workgroups.

Patient COVID-19 Infection Status	Pre-Hospital Discharge Testing Protocol Recommendations
COVID Positive	NO additional testing will be conducted, as a patient is going to a COVID + unit in an inpatient healthcare facility (inpatient psychiatric facility, IRF, LTACH, SNF) or being discharged to their home with home health services or to another residential facility (Assisted Living, Congregate Care, Rest Home, etc.). Discharge planners will take into consideration the clinical capabilities of the setting to which the patient is being discharged and will follow the appropriate discharge guidance for the post-acute care setting. *
COVID Negative (on hospital admission)	1 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test or any molecular test including nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) is preferred upon admission to the hospital. Only if PCR nor any molecular tests including NAAT is NOT available, then a Rapid Antigen (Ag) COVID test is acceptable (BINAX-NOW is preferred); **AND** 1 additional PCR or any molecular test including NAAT within 48 hours of discharge (if initial test on admission is no longer within that timeframe). Only if PCR nor any molecular test including NAAT is NOT available, then a Rapid Ag COVID test is acceptable (BINAX-NOW is preferred).
COVID Recovered (within 90 days of initial COVID + result or illness onset)	Because repeat COVID testing is strongly discouraged for 90 days from the initial COVID + result or illness onset or unless clinically warranted, NO additional testing will be conducted if a patient meets criteria for COVID Recovered status within 90 days of initial COVID + result or illness onset. • For patients considered COVID Recovered > 90 days, testing will be in accordance with Infection Control/ quarantine recommendations. • COVID Recovered status will be communicated in the hospital referral.
COVID Exposed/ Potentially Exposed**	Testing will be in accordance with Infection Control / quarantine recommendations or time-based resolution guidance as put forth by the Department of Public Health. ***
Additional Considerations:	Post-acute care settings will not require a test on the day of discharge or within 24 hours of discharge unless clinically indicated. Hospitals shall provide to the post-acute care setting to which the patient is being discharged the following information: • The date and type of the original test performed and the results of said test. • For patients who are symptomatic, the date of illness/symptom onset. • The date and type of the most recent test performed and the results of said test (pending, positive, negative). This recommendation does not supersede the DPH Guidance "Update to Caring for Long-Term Care Residents during the COVID-19 Emergency" issued March 12, 2021 that states that "Long-Term care facilities shall not condition admission or return to the facility on COVID-19 testing or COVID-19 test results."

- * Includes Leading Age Massachusetts / Mass-ALA Guidance for Assisted Living Residences and Hospitals Relative to Return from Hospitals for Assisted Living Residents Related to COVID-19 (June 8, 2020): https://www.leadingagema.org/assets/COVID19/Discharge%20Guidance%20for%20ALR%20June%208%202020%20Final.pdf

- ** A patient is considered exposed to SARS-CoV-2 if they are within 6 feet of an infectious individual for a cumulative time period of 15 or more minutes during a 24-hour period. Link: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/responding-acute-care-facilities.html and https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html

- *** DPH Quarantine Guidance: https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-and-guidance-for-persons-in-isolation-due-to-covid-19-english/download