



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

Date: October 1, 2026

To: Medical Laboratory Directors, Local Health Officers and Healthcare Providers

From: David Blythe, MD MPH
Director, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Outbreak Response Bureau

Victoria L. Campodónico, MD, PhD, D(ABMM)
Interim Director, Laboratories Administration

Re: Start of Enhanced Influenza and Viral Respiratory Pathogen Surveillance Program

The 2026–2027 enhanced seasonal influenza surveillance season will commence on Sunday, October 4, 2026. Again, we are expanding our influenza surveillance activities in Maryland to target other viral respiratory pathogens that your laboratories may routinely test for, such as SARS-CoV-2, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), parainfluenza viruses, adenoviruses, rhinoviruses/enteroviruses, and human metapneumovirus.

To support respiratory disease surveillance conducted in accordance with Maryland law, including the Annotated Code of Maryland, Health-General Article §18-205, and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 10.06.01.03, **we are requesting that laboratories submit remnant specimens from patients with respiratory illness who have tested positive for influenza A or B, SARS-CoV-2, or another viral respiratory pathogen (e.g., RSV, parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, rhinovirus/enterovirus, or human metapneumovirus, etc.) to the Maryland Department of Health Laboratories Administration (MDH Labs) for typing and possible further characterization.**

Submission of these specimens during the early weeks of the seasonal influenza transmission period will help us quickly identify and characterize the respiratory viruses circulating in the state. A subset of influenza-positive specimens will be selected for genomic sequencing. Resulting viral sequence data may be shared with national and international public health surveillance networks to support the monitoring of circulating influenza viruses, emerging variants, and other changes of public health significance.

Additionally, CDC has requested that we sustain sequencing surveillance for SARS-CoV-2. Therefore, we encourage laboratories to continue submitting SARS-CoV-2-positive specimens to MDH Labs to support this important national surveillance activity. When viral respiratory

disease activity increases, we will provide additional guidance on scaling back the submission of surveillance specimens.

As always, we request the immediate submission of specimens from patients with suspected novel influenza A virus infections. Arrangements for priority testing to detect potential avian influenza viruses, such as influenza A(H5N1) and A(H7N9), can be made when patients meet the recommended clinical and epidemiological criteria. Please contact your local health department to confirm that the criteria are met and coordinate submission of these specimens to MDH Labs. Specimens from patients with recent swine exposure will also be accepted for timely diagnostic testing for influenza A(H3N2v).

Please visit our website at <https://health.maryland.gov/laboratories/Pages/Influenza.aspx> and select *Specimen Submission Guidelines for Suspected Influenza Virus Infection* for logistical details regarding the submission of influenza specimens to MDH Labs. You may also contact the Molecular Diagnostics Unit at 443-681-3924 or 443-681-3905 with questions regarding changes to the surveillance testing program.

Your participation in the enhanced influenza and viral respiratory pathogen surveillance program is greatly appreciated. Specimens submitted to MDH Labs provide valuable insight into the characteristics and transmission of respiratory viruses circulating in Maryland and contribute critically important data to national and international influenza surveillance networks.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and understanding.

cc: Dr. Meg Sullivan
Dr. Monique Duwell
Dr. David Crum
Dr. Heather Goux
Mr. Brian Bachaus
Ms. Curi Kim
Ms. Maya Monroe