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To: Wisconsin Clinicians, Infection Preventionists, Clinical Laboratories, Tribal Health Centers,
and Local Health Departments

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Measles Testing And Public Health Notification: Guidance For Wisconsin Clinicians

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Summary

With measles cases continuing to spread at high levels in the United States, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) **strongly recommends** that all measles testing (PCR and serologic testing) for individuals suspected of having measles are sent to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) for fee-exempt testing. Time reporting is critical to reduce the spread, and providers are reminded to isolate, test, and report all suspect cases.

Background

The U.S. has been experiencing a surge in measles cases in the last two years, including several protracted outbreaks occurring in communities with significant numbers of individuals who are not vaccinated. Since Jan. 1, 2025, Wisconsin has reported 38 measles cases. The detection of additional travel-related cases remains plausible in the months ahead. It is therefore crucial that we continue to have a robust surveillance system to detect measles in Wisconsin and ensure that timely identification and actions are taken to reduce spread in our communities.

To improve our capacity to detect and respond to measles cases, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Division of Public Health (DPH) and the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) are streamlining the process for testing patients suspected of having measles. Going forward, all measles testing (PCR and serologic testing) for individuals suspected of having measles are strongly recommended to be sent to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) for fee-exempt testing.

Key Actions

Health care facilities should ensure that three critical steps are taken whenever measles is suspected:

Isolate, Test, and Report.

Isolate: Clinicians should ensure that the patient suspected of having measles is under airborne precautions while at the health facility and that they remain isolated at home until measles is ruled out and/or they are no longer infectious.

Test: Health care providers who suspect measles in a patient should collect the appropriate specimens and ensure they are sent to the WSLH. For testing information and specimen collection instruction, please see [WSLH clinical testing services](#) web page. While approval to test for measles is **not** needed from state or local public health, it is still imperative that public health notification occurs immediately as indicated below (and may happen simultaneously with testing).

While some clinical laboratories offer measles testing, DPH strongly recommends using WSLH for fee-exempt testing to reduce financial barriers, facilitate rapid diagnosis, and support coordination with public health investigations.

Please note that serologic testing requested solely for the purpose of assessing immunity (that is, for individuals who are not ill) should **not** be sent to WSLH; those may be tested at a commercial or hospital-based laboratory.

Report: Measles is a Category I Reportable Disease (more information can be found on the [DHS Disease Reporting web page](#)). Health care providers should immediately report by telephone the identification of a patient whom they **suspect** to have measles to the [local health department](#) in which the patient resides. Notification should include providing demographic, clinical, and risk information (such as vaccination status, travel in the last three weeks, any known contact with measles cases).

This information will allow the local health department to follow up with the patient, answer any additional questions they may have, and ensure appropriate control measures are implemented while test results are pending.

If the local health department cannot be reached within a reasonable time (for example, after-hours, weekends, and holidays), contact the **DPH epidemiologist on call at 800-943-0003 option 4**.

We appreciate your attention and request that this information be shared widely within your organization to ensure timely, appropriate actions can be taken to minimize the spread of measles.

For questions during routine business hours (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.), please contact the DPH Bureau of Communicable Diseases through the main number at 608-267-9003. Additionally, more information can be found on the [DHS Measles web page](#).