Hospitals are seeing an increasing number of requests to perform a COVID test prior to discharge. There are significant limitations to hospital discharge testing of non-COVID hospital patients which this document addresses.

Per current CDC Guidance still in effect:

A single negative test upon admission does not mean that the resident was not exposed or will not become infected in the future. Newly admitted or readmitted residents should still be monitored for evidence of COVID-19 for 14 days after admission and cared for using all recommended COVID-19 PPE. *Testing should not be required prior to transfer of a resident from an acute-care facility to a nursing home.*

The CDC and AHCA both comment on testing on admission to the nursing home: If the test results are negative, you should still keep the person in isolation for 14 days as the negative test may be due to the person being infected during the 2 to 14-day incubation period people experience with this virus. CDC recommends creating if possible a “holding” space or unit for new admissions to be held for 14 days. There have been cases in St Louis where a negative COVID test was done prior to discharge with the patient developing COVID shortly thereafter. Therefore a COVID test on hospital discharge of a non-COVID patient does not change any transmission precaution protocols the nursing home must employ. Testing non-COVID hospital discharges may accidentally give staff a false sense of security and laxity in PPE and isolation precautions. Additionally, testing low risk individuals runs a significant risk of creating as many false positive as true positives, which then causes among other things delays in patient recovery. Hospital COVID_19 testing supplies and capabilities remain limited and in flux, especially the more rapid tests that would facilitate efficient discharge, and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Concern for mass testing and having new admissions count towards new cases is unfounded. Both the CDC and St Louis County DPH have clearly stated that a positive COVID test in a new admission does not count as a new case and affect phase transition as long as the patient was kept on appropriate transmission precautions.

1 Preparing for COVID-19 in Nursing Homes; last updated by CDC on May 19, 2020.

2 [https://www.ahcancal.org/facility_operations/disaster_planning/Documents/Algorithm-Testing-Cohorting.pdf](https://www.ahcancal.org/facility_operations/disaster_planning/Documents/Algorithm-Testing-Cohorting.pdf); last updated by AHCA on May 28, 2020