



October 23, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

On October 15, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) added a **Point-of-Care (POC) Laboratory Reporting Tool within the NHSN Long-Term Care COVID-19 Module**. This added capability enables Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)-certified long-term care facilities to meet the [Department of Health and Human Services' \(HHS\) requirement to report SARS-CoV-2 point-of-care antigen test data](#), and other on-site COVID-19 laboratory testing data.

**On October 19, 2020, HHS updated its reporting guidance to indicate that CMS-certified long-term care facilities are required to use NHSN to meet this reporting requirement.** Specifically, the [HHS guidance](#) states that:

*"CMS-certified long-term care facilities shall submit point-of-care SARS-CoV-2 testing data, including antigen testing data, to CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN). This requirement to submit data to CDC's NHSN applies only to CMS-certified long-term care facilities. Test data submitted to NHSN will be reported to appropriate state and local health departments using standard electronic laboratory messages. Other types of long-term care facilities may voluntarily report testing data in NHSN for self-tracking or to fulfill state or local reporting requirements, if any."*

CDC has worked closely with CMS, public health partner organizations, and long-term care associations to develop the new reporting tool, which is designed to reduce duplicative reporting, meet federal reporting requirements, and deliver POC laboratory test data from NHSN to state and local health departments using standard electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) messages. This new NHSN functionality creates a single, standardized reporting pathway in a system that approximately 15,400 nursing homes already use to submit other mandatory COVID-19 data, per [CMS-5531-IFC](#). NHSN supports COVID-19 data sharing in the HHS pandemic response and for use by CMS programs.

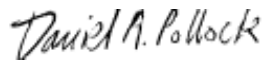
Long-term care facilities that currently report these data to state and/or local public health departments in their jurisdiction through other mechanisms or directly as provided in the June 4 guidance should contact their state and/or local public health department prior to moving entirely to using the NHSN. Similarly, if specific jurisdictions already receive POC laboratory data from long-term care facilities and the jurisdiction plans to maintain that reporting pathway as the new federal reporting requirement goes into effect, CDC will work with those jurisdictions in a joint effort to clearly communicate expectations and requirements to nursing homes regarding the

switch to the NHSN module. To initiate that coordinated outreach, please contact Kathy Bridson at [fsa6@cdc.gov](mailto:fsa6@cdc.gov) with the subject line “POC Antigen Reporting.”

Finally, in order to utilize the new tool to fulfill reporting requirements, nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that are NHSN users will need to upgrade their NHSN Secure Access Management Service (SAMS) from Level 1 to Level 3. CDC is working closely with facilities to assist them in this process, and many have already completed this enrollment. Facilities contacting public health departments regarding their SAMS access level can be reminded that Level 3 reporting requires the use of a SAMS grid card, or be directed to email [nhsn@cdc.gov](mailto:nhsn@cdc.gov) with the subject line “Enhancing Data Security” to begin upgrading their SAMS access to use this tool.

CDC is committed to working with public health partner organizations, state and local health departments, long-term care facilities, and CMS to implement this reporting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel A. Pollock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Daniel A. Pollock, MD  
Surveillance Branch Chief  
Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion  
National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention