



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

For Release: Immediately

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Date: May 6, 2020

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WATSONVILLE SPECIMEN COLLECTION SITE TO LAUNCH

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce the start of a new COVID-19 testing site. Located in Watsonville, the site will initially focus on frontline health care workers, first responders and employees working in essential services and roles.

As part of a recently announced partnership between the state of California, the COVID-19 Testing Task Force and OptumServe, the new testing site will have an eventual capacity of 132 specimens per day to be sent to commercial labs for processing. The site is being coordinated by SAVE Lives Santa Cruz County, which is tasked with making recommendations on safely reopening sectors of the community and local economy based on data, equity and increasing disease surveillance capacity.

“This is exciting news, and one of many steps we are taking to rapidly scale up our capacity to monitor COVID-19 within Santa Cruz County, particularly among highly vulnerable members of our community,” said Margaret Lapiz, a former executive vice president with The Permanente Group recently hired to oversee planning and implementation of SAVE Lives Santa Cruz County.

A partnership with Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, SAVE Lives Santa Cruz County is increasing local COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, and quarantine/isolation services, which are essential to reopening workplaces, community services and schools until a coronavirus vaccine is widely available. Benchmarks for lifting certain Shelter-in-Place restrictions include an ongoing decrease of new cases; rapid and widely available testing; a health system capable of caring for all who fall ill; and increased capacity for rapid contact tracing, case investigation and isolation and quarantine.

The initial launch of the OptumServe site will also include a focus on persons identified by contact tracing and those in congregate living situations, including residents and staff of skilled nursing facilities. Testing will eventually welcome all community members, although symptomatic individuals are encouraged to call their health care provider and arrange testing to facilitate quicker diagnosis.

Specimen collection is by appointment only. No walk-up or drive-through testing will occur at the site.

The OptumServe site will also support expanded testing to vulnerable populations such as farmworkers and people experiencing homelessness. Materials will be available to Spanish speakers and all individuals regardless of immigration or health insurance status.

Samples will be collected via nasopharyngeal swab tests (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVJNWefmHjE>). Serology or antibody tests will not be conducted at this site, as it is not set up to implement blood draws.

The site is one of 80 established throughout California, to be operated by Eden Prairie, Minn.-based OptumServe to increase testing for COVID-19. In addition, local providers are also increasing testing capacity, UC Santa Cruz is establishing laboratory capabilities to further increase testing, and UCSF offers testing to all Public Health agencies in all California counties.

SAVE Lives Santa Cruz County is tasked with establishing local testing priorities in accordance with California Department of Public Health guidelines, which are available at:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Expanding-Access-to-Testing-Updated-Interim-Guidance-on-Prioritization-for-COVID-19-Laboratory-Testing-0501.aspx>