



<b>DATE:</b>	4/14/2020
<b>TO:</b>	Health Alert Network
<b>FROM:</b>	Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ALERT: Providing demographic variables as part of laboratory submission forms</b>
<b>DISTRIBUTION:</b>	Statewide
<b>LOCATION:</b>	n/a
<b>STREET ADDRESS:</b>	n/a
<b>COUNTY:</b>	n/a
<b>MUNICIPALITY:</b>	n/a
<b>ZIP CODE:</b>	n/a

**This transmission is a “Health Alert”: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.**

**HOSPITALS:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

- Key demographic variables including patient date of birth, phone number, address, race, and ethnicity are frequently missing from laboratory submission forms and patient test results
- These variables are essential for a complete and timely public health response to patients with COVID-19 and other reportable diseases
- Providers are reminded that patient date of birth, address, telephone number, race, and ethnicity data fields should be included on all laboratory submission forms
- Clinical laboratories are mandated to report the name, age, address, telephone number, and other information requested by the Department regarding the person from whom the specimen was obtained. See (PA Code, Title 28, Chapter 27: § 27.22 “Reporting of cases by clinical laboratories”)
- Laboratories are unable to report this information unless they receive it with submitted specimens

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (Department) has identified a large number of laboratory test results submitted without key variables including patient date of birth, address, and telephone number. These demographic fields are essential for correct jurisdiction assignment and for the timely initiation of case investigations, particularly related to COVID-19 exposures.

In addition, race and ethnicity data are missing from more than 60% of reports submitted to the Department. This information is necessary to understand public health disparities across the Commonwealth and to guide resource needs and allocation.

Providers should always include patient name, date of birth, address, telephone number, and race and ethnicity information when completing the laboratory submission/requisition form for patients being

referred for testing of a reportable condition, including COVID-19. If this information is not included on the laboratory submission/requisition form, the ordering facility should enter these demographic elements into PA-NEDSS as mandated under PA Code, Title 28, Chapter 27.

Clinical laboratories are required to report the name, age, address, and telephone number from whom the specimen was obtained under PA Code, Title 28, Chapter 27: § 27.22 “Reporting of cases by clinical laboratories.”

(<http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/028/chapter27/s27.22.html&d=reduce>). However, they are unable to do this if they do not receive the information from the providers submitting specimens. In addition, clinical laboratories reporting via ELR should report race data in PID-10 and ethnicity data in PID-22 as per Health Level Seven (HL7) version 2.5.1 guidelines. Clinical laboratories using manual entry into PA-NEDSS should include this information in the appropriate short form sections.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

<p>This information is current as of April 13, 2020 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.</p>
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