**Employee Testing Options**

**For Agency Consideration**

Testing for COVID-19 does not lend itself to a one-size-fits-all solution. State agencies have a variety of missions, workforces, environments, geographical locations and dispersement of staff. DHRM consulted with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to identify considerations for agencies as they arrange for employee testing to comply with Executive Directive #18.



Considerations for selection of testing for non-healthcare workplaces are noted **on the** [**VDH Website**](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2021/08/Guidance-for-Screening-Testing-in-the-Workplace____8-4-2021.docx.pdf)

* ***PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction)*** –
  + According to VDH and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), the “gold standard” for COVID-19 testing.
  + This is a more sensitive test that requires the use of a laboratory, and, while a turnaround time for results may be as little as 24 hours, the turnaround time is subject to delays based on the volume of testing being conducted and the laboratory’s capacity.
  + These tests require nasal, throat, or saliva swabs.
  + The cost for an individual test is approximately $65+.
* ***Antigen testing (the so-called rapid testing)*** –
  + Doesn’t require laboratory involvement and is less sensitive than the PCR.
  + Tests can be observed or self-administered, and the turnaround time runs 10/15 minutes to 30/45 minutes from administration to test results.
  + There is a higher chance of false negatives with antigen testing than with the molecular (PCR) testing.
  + The cost of an individual test is around $25

Either antigen testing or PCR testing or both meet the Directive’s requirements.[[1]](#footnote-1)



**Reminders about testing:**

* Weekly COVID-19 testing for those employees identified in Executive Directive #18 is considered a condition of employment. Accordingly, the employer must pay for the testing.
* Provide employees with information about the type of test being used, how often, and when the tests must be performed and reported, etc.
* Inform them regarding your agency’s procedures for reporting this information. Such information must be recorded confidentially. If self-administered tests are being used, the employee must accurately and timely report the results according to the agency’s protocols.
* Consider any accommodations needed (due to medical conditions/disability or sincerely-held religious beliefs).
* Provide information to employees who test positive about VDH/CDC guidance.
* Be sure to be aware of DOLI/VDH reporting requirements for employers when employees test positive.

1. Antibody tests are blood tests that detect if an individual may have had the disease. These do not comply with the testing requirements of the Directive. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)