

## Guidelines for Setting-Up and Operationalizing Rapid Antigen Testing Program in Shelter Settings

### Background

The [Provincial Antigen Screening Program](#) (PASP) is a provincial program that provides free Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) kits to select sectors including health care providers, congregate settings, education and childcare, and the broader public sector as an additional screening measure to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

SSHA is participating in the PASP in partnership with Toronto Public Health (TPH) to identify cases of COVID-19 that may have otherwise been missed, supporting workplace safety and business continuity. RAT is an additional precaution and does not replace symptom screening, hand hygiene, and good infection prevention and control practice. **Vaccination is a key preventive measure. All staff and clients should be encouraged to complete an approved COVID-19 vaccination series.**

A Rapid Antigen Test can be performed anywhere (i.e., on-site, at the place of employment or residence) by any trained individual and does not require shipping a specimen to a lab for processing. The rapid antigen test is currently administered through a nasopharyngeal, deep nasal, or combined nasal and throat swabs, and results are available in approximately 15 minutes. Note: a combined nasal and throat swab can increase sensitivity of rapid antigen tests. It is important to note that nasopharyngeal swabs are only administered by registered health practitioners.

This document provides guidance on how to establish and safely operate an Antigen Testing Program in congregate settings including shelter and hotel programs.

### Enrolment

Eligible service providers who are interested in providing Rapid Antigen Testing clinics at their locations can [register with the Province](#).

Once accepted to participate in the program, the province will provide Service Managers (or facilities) with the required number of tests for free, pending available inventory.

Please note that participants will be responsible for all additional program implementation costs (e.g., health professional expenses, supplies, and the implementation of physical safety measures).

## Administration

To ensure effective implementation, shelters should designate a lead for the COVID- 19 rapid antigen testing program for their site(s). The site program lead will be responsible for coordinating and managing the testing program including but not limited to:

1. Reviewing Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Guidance: Considerations for Rapid Antigen Screening](#)
2. Registering with the province
3. Ordering and receiving testing kits, checking expiration dates to ensure kits are not expired
4. Defining roles and responsibilities of testing team (i.e., team lead and testing staff)
5. Identifying rapid antigen testing team members (if all staff are not trained)
6. Organize meeting(s) to clarify roles and responsibilities of testing team members
7. Ensuring each testing team member sign a Confidentiality Agreement
8. Preparing a Resource List (e.g., online training, health and safety information)
9. Establishing a process for documenting and reporting test results consistent with the Provincial Testing Program requirements
10. Ensuring staff complete required training and adhere to safety measures
11. Monitoring and evaluating project implementation
12. Providing support to staff as needed

## Testing Eligibility

Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) can be used for testing asymptomatic individuals and to diagnose COVID-19 infection. Antigen Point of Care Testing (POCT) may only be performed using a COVID-19 medical device that has been authorized by the Minister of Health (Canada) for point-of-care use, and is available in Ontario.

**PCR testing is preferred for symptomatic staff and clients. However, RATs are a suitable alternative where PCR testing is not readily available.**

## Selecting Locations for Specimen Collection and Testing

Identifying a suitable location in the facility for testing is essential to ensuring the security of equipment and safety of all persons involved in the testing program. When identifying a location, consultation with staff is recommended.

Consider the following key elements when selecting a testing location:

1. Identify a dedicated location to complete specimen collection, and if necessary, a separate location for specimen testing; consider proximity to eye wash station and privacy
2. Ensure location is both safe and accessible
3. If batch testing is expected, develop a floor plan
4. If possible, the location should have separate entry and exit points
5. Set up waiting room/area that is physically distanced where applicable
6. Physical markings and signage for maintaining physical distancing
7. Install appropriate signage(s) promoting public health measures

## Staff Training

Completing the online training provided by the province is critical for effective implementation of the testing program. Staff conducting tests should feel comfortable as subject matter experts (SMEs) to be able to oversee testing and answer questions.

The program lead must provide staff with information about training requirements and training materials that are available from [Ontario Health online](#). The project lead must ensure there is sufficient number of staff trained on specimen collection and testing to ensure all persons requiring a test can access testing as soon as possible.

1. Registration
2. Preparation of kits
3. Labelling
4. Swabbing
5. Testing specimens
6. Documentation of results
7. Disposal of test materials

Staff must provide the program lead or designate with information about training courses that have been completed and the project lead will maintain a record of training.

It is recommended that dry runs be conducted to increase the confidence and comfort levels of staff, in particular, staff with no prior testing experience.

## Equipment & Supplies

To ensure safe and uninterrupted operations, the project lead should ensure that sufficient tests, personal protective equipment and other supplies are available and accessible. At a minimum, each testing station must have the following:

1. PPE for clinic staff (mask, eye protection, gown, gloves and face shield)
2. Plexiglass shield or other barrier, where possible
3. Hand sanitizer - Alcohol-based Hand Rub (ABHR)
4. Disinfectant
5. Biohazard waste containers
6. Masking tape
7. Eye wash station (if possible)

The program lead must ensure test supplies are stored in a secure and access-controlled location.

## Testing

Rapid antigen tests can be performed by any trained individual (they do not have to be a health care professional) or be self-administered under the supervision of a trained individual.

In the case of an outbreak, service providers should follow Toronto Public Health's guidance around rapid antigen testing.

Service providers must report all confirmed positive results to Toronto Public Health at [TPHshelters@toronto.ca](mailto:TPHshelters@toronto.ca) or call the TPH Shelters Intake Line at 416-338-1521 between the hours of 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. for follow-up. After-hours, contact 311. Individuals with a positive rapid antigen test are considered positive and should immediately self-isolate. Eligible clients can be [referred to the COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Site](#).

Project lead and staff will need to familiarize themselves with the process for communicating and reporting test results as per the Provincial Testing Guidance.

## Health & Safety Practices

Ensuring compliance with health and safety practices is at the core of this program. Project leads must check and replenish test supplies at a pre-determined level and as needed and ensure staff follow all health and safety protocols including wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE.)

Project lead must work with staff to achieve the following health and safety outcomes:

No.	Item/Issue	Expected Outcome
1	Hand Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hand hygiene performed consistently by staff before putting on and after removing PPE</li> </ul>
2	Mask/Protective Eyewear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants wear PPE (e.g. gloves, gown, protective eyewear, N95 respirator) in compliance with the <a href="#">SSHA Shelter Directive 2020-02</a></li> </ul>
3	Physical distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical distancing of at least 2 metres is maintained where possible</li> </ul>
4	Cleaning and Disinfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Test station is cleaned and disinfected at least once daily and as needed</li> <li>High touch surfaces are cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day and when visibly dirty</li> <li>Plexiglass and other physical barriers cleaned and disinfected daily and when visibly dirty</li> <li>Spills cleaned and disinfected immediately</li> </ul>
5	PPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate PPE is worn correctly</li> <li>PPE is changed when damp, torn or visibly soiled</li> <li>Gloves changed in between participants and disposed of properly after use</li> </ul>
6	Waste Disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waste containers are available and accessible</li> <li>Bio-hazard containers replaced when <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> full and disposed of appropriately</li> </ul>
7	Incident Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incidents documented and reported</li> </ul>

## Documentation and Reporting of Test Data

Once a shelter or hotel program is enrolled in the rapid antigen testing program, it will be on-boarded on to the Health Data Collection Service and will be provided information and training on how to submit data. All staff who are collecting, processing, interpreting and communicating results are required to sign a Declaration and Pledge of Confidentiality.

Programs are required to submit weekly reporting in the centralized database, the Health Data Collection Service. Participating shelters will be required to adhere to the following data collecting and report submission requirements to support the evaluation of the program.

1. Weekly reporting of data for each participating site (i.e., if registration with province was done by site, data should be reported by site and if registration was done by portfolio/program, then reporting should be done by portfolio/program).
2. Weekly day entered by Friday at 11:59pm EST

Participating shelters will submit weekly reports to the Province into the Ministry of Health's Health Data Collection Service regarding the following:

1. Number of rapid antigen tests used
2. Number of invalid rapid antigen test results
3. Number of individuals who tested positive with a rapid antigen test

## Resources

[COVID-19 Guidance: Considerations for Rapid Antigen Point-of-Care Screening](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance: Homelessness Services & Congregate Living Settings](#)

[Panbio Onboarding Guide V8 Feb 12 2022 EnglishTM.pdf \(ontariohealth.ca\)](#)

[Implementing a COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Screening Program \(ontariohealth.ca\)](#)

<https://www.ontariohealth.ca/COVID-19/Health-System-Response-Resources#panbio>