

Identifying Specimen Providers for Respiratory Virus Surveillance

Respiratory virus surveillance is dependent on a robust network of specimen providers. Specimens submitted to public health laboratories are tested to provide data to meet local and national surveillance objectives for influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and other respiratory viruses.

The composition of a public health laboratory's respiratory specimen submitter network varies greatly by jurisdiction and may include a combination of submitter types. It is essential to collaborate with epidemiology partners to establish and maintain a strong network. Below is a list of potential specimen providers that can be included in a submitter network.

When choosing specimen providers, it is important to consider feasibility of submission and representativeness of the sampled population, including demographic variables such as age, geographic location and healthcare setting. Ideally, the surveillance program should have the capability to establish targeted surveillance of specific populations, if needed. Targeted surveillance (e.g., for outbreaks, animal exposures, travelers from outside the United States) may be useful to answer specific questions, especially if a novel virus is detected.

Some providers may submit specimens that have already been identified as positive for a particular respiratory virus (pre-screened; see items with an * in the list below), while others may submit specimens that have not yet been tested (unscreened). Unscreened and pre-screened specimens are both important for respiratory virologic surveillance, but it is critical to understand how to use each type. See the [Influenza Virologic Right Size Roadmap](#) for more details.

The [Influenza Virologic Right Size Roadmap](#) provides detailed information on how to build an effective surveillance system.

[Learn more about respiratory virus submitter networks and sampling.](#)

Potential Respiratory Specimen Providers

- **Hospitals***
 - Laboratories*
 - Emergency departments*
- **Outpatient healthcare providers** (e.g., Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network [ILINet] participants*)
 - Primary care clinics*
 - Urgent care facilities*
 - Pediatric facilities
 - University student clinics
 - Federally qualified health centers
- **Local public health laboratories***
- **Local reference laboratories***
- **Commercial clinical/pathology laboratories***
- **Tribal health facilities**
- **Long-term care facilities and other institutional settings**
- **Medical examiner's office**

* Specimens from these facilities may be pre-screened positive for a particular respiratory virus (e.g., influenza or SARS-CoV-2).

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