

COVID-19 Testing among Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants: A Checklist for Health Departments

Refugee, immigrant, and migrant (RIM) communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Testing is an important tool to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, along with ensuring appropriate follow-up and allocation of resources. This checklist of actions for health departments will help effectively plan COVID-19 testing among RIM communities.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Develop partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), grassroots organizations, faith-based organizations and other community groups. Maintain those relationships across COVID-19 response activities, including CICT (see our community engagement toolkit for more resources)
- Partner with health clinics who have established and trusted community relationships to raise awareness about COVID-19
- Create informal and formal partnerships between health departments and communities such as [communities of practice](#), community liaisons and/or community advisory boards
- Hire bilingual and bicultural staff from local communities to aid in testing, both as medical and support staff
- Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate messaging about COVID-19 testing
- Raise community awareness of COVID-19 testing by working with community partners to disseminate advertising of the testing event
- Connect with your [State Refugee Health Coordinator](#), who can introduce you to clinical and community partners working with refugee populations and resources in your state

- Identify and collaborate with a COVID-19 testing laboratory that has the capacity to run the COVID-19 tests

Cultural and Linguistic Considerations

- Offer testing at locations that are accessible and appropriate for the community in collaboration with community partners
- Make testing easy and unintrusive; consider the following:
 - Offer testing in a walk-up setting so individuals without cars can access
 - Do not require appointments
 - Keep any individual information collected to a minimum and optional
- Overcome stigma about testing by performing community outreach in advance of the event; hand out information and masks in the community around the testing event
- Collaborate and co-brand testing events with community partners
- Provide bilingual and bicultural staff or interpreters at testing locations who align with the communities expected to attend the testing event
- Collect preferred language at time of testing to facilitate in future case investigation
- Offer culturally and linguistically appropriate education on topics such as what to do while waiting for a test, the process of contact tracing and case investigation, and information about isolation and quarantine; this should be provided primarily verbally and then reinforced by printed translated handouts

Privacy Considerations and Case Investigation/Contact Tracing

- Acknowledge that some members of RIM communities have distrust of government authorities, may have concerns about legal status in the US, and have suffered oppression and/or violence by government authorities in their country of origin; consider including reassuring information in clear and simple language
- Provide individuals clear instructions on what personal information is being collected at the event, including name and contact information; reassure that names and contact information will be kept confidential

- If possible, collect two forms of contact information to aid in case investigations/contact tracing for positive cases. If they don't have an email, generate "dummy email" that will be checked by staff that will call people with test results
- Confirm that the phone number is recorded correctly by making a quick call on-site
- Provide specific details and reassurance about receiving phone call(s), including the exact number that will appear on their phone, if called; emphasize the importance of answering the call and encourage them to save the CICT number in their phone, if known at the time of testing
- Provide guidance on what information may be collected if there is a positive test result, including names and contact information of close contacts; describe how this will improve their overall care and will not impact their legal status or that of close contacts

Follow-Up

- Acknowledge the difficulty some RIM community members will face when asked to isolate or quarantine (e.g. crowded housing, employment concerns especially for essential workers). Provide practical information: see CDC guidance and support those living [shared housing](#) and [households living in close quarters](#)
- Find a community health center or community-based organization that can support individuals who test positive to provide medical advice and resources for management, isolation, and follow up
- Ensure follow-up is performed by individuals who speak the preferred language of the community, or if that is not possible, with the use of a professional interpreter
- Share relevant call numbers, including numbers for health departments, clinics, and COVID-19 hotlines
- Find community partners who have infrastructure to assist with providing social support services, including existing services for housing for those who need to isolate/quarantine (particularly in multi-generational households), food delivery, medication delivery, sanitization supply delivery, childcare, employment support, and rent/utility assistance