

State Emergency Operations Center Long-term Care: Demobilization Plan

July 6, 2021

The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) Long-term Care (LTC) branch has initiated its demobilization plan, inclusive of the following services: crisis staffing support, personal protective equipment (PPE), testing/swabbing services, and vaccination administration support.

Background

On May 7, 2020, Governor Walz announced the launch of the 5-point LTC Battle Plan to ensure coordination of our extensive LTC response resources. The goals of the battle plan are to help facilities obtain prompt specimen collection and testing services; address COVID-related staffing shortages; ensure sufficient PPE supplies and training; implement infection control and prevention best practices; and to build on leveraging partnerships. In January 2021, a focus on LTC vaccination efforts was added as part of the LTC response scope of work.

Since inception of the program, mobile swabbing teams have collected nearly 250,000 specimens in more than 900 LTC facilities. State and federal staffing teams have provided on-site support to 67 facilities over the course of the pandemic, 113 facilities received assistance through Aladtec, and we provided crisis staffing consultation to 1,230 facilities.

Over the past few months, we have achieved several important milestones in our COVID-19 LTC statewide response, positioning us to begin the demobilization process. Most critically, outbreaks in LTC facilities have dropped from more than 3,200 weekly cases in November of 2020 (highest point) for residents and staff to less than 20 cases in the most recent week. Only two percent of LTC facilities currently have active outbreaks.

Among facilities reporting vaccination data, more than 89% of LTC residents in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities are fully vaccinated, dramatically reducing the risk of COVID-19 infections among this population. Currently, no LTC facilities (out of more than 2,000 LTC providers) have contacted the SEOC seeking crisis staffing resources related to a COVID-19 outbreak.

While MDH will continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, some response activities provided by the SEOC will now be demobilized. This reduction in services is based on assessment of continued emergent need, availability of alternative support, and SEOC operational capacity. While some activities

will fully demobilize, others will be integrated into ongoing MDH COVID-19 operations. This document outlines SEOC services that will be demobilized and provides guidance on how to prepare for the transition. LTC facilities should continue to use the following online resources:

- LTC Emergency Preparedness (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/ltc/index.html>)
- MDH, Long-term Care: COVID-19 (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltc.html>)
- Regional Health Care Preparedness Coordinators (RHPCs)(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/coalitions/rhpc.html>)

MDH leaders recognize that many LTC providers continue to experience challenges associated with the ongoing COVID-19 response. Therefore, it is critical for LTC providers to collaborate with local and regional response leaders to ensure transparency in communications and situational awareness, access to readily available resources, and access to a cadre of community partners. MDH will continue to monitor a variety of data sources and maintain open communications with statewide LTC response partners, to ensure all partners are prepared for a potential statewide surge.

Snapshot of key areas and their demobilization timelines

Program area	Service demobilized	End date
Staffing	Staffing call line	8/31/2021
	Staffing email address	8/31/2021
	Crisis Staff Managers	8/31/2021
	Aladtec System	12/31/2021
Testing	Nurse triage line	6/30/2021
	Mobile specimen collection	7/15/2021
	MDH standing order	9/30/2021
	Mayo Health System’s lab processing	12/31/2021
Vaccination	Two of three SEOC vaccination contractors	8/31/2021
	Assisted living facility vaccination reporting in REDCap	8/31/2021
	Final vaccination contractor	9/30/2021
PPE	Final personal protective equipment (PPE) push to requesting assisted living facilities	7/31/2021
	REDCap PPE request link	9/30/2021
	PPE email address	12/31/2021

Addressing crisis staffing shortages

By August 31, 2021

Access to the staffing call line (651-201-3970), staffing email inbox (health.covid.seoc-ltc.staffing.response@state.mn.us), and the Crisis Staff Managers will end on 8/31/21. In addition, staffing resources provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services will end on 8/31/21.

NOTE: Use of the Aladtec staffing system will remain available through 12/31/21 to support facilities experiencing COVID-19 related staffing crises. To access Aladtec between 9/1/2021-12/31/21, please send an email to SEOC LTC email inbox (health.seocltc@state.mn.us).

What if I need help?

Through December 31, emails can be sent to the SEOC LTC email inbox (health.seocltc@state.mn.us). If you are experiencing staffing shortages, please refer to your facility's emergency operation or other COVID response plans.

Below are some additional resources you can use:

- Defining Crisis Staffing Shortage (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/crisis.html>)
- LTC Contingency Staffing Plan (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/ltc/index.html>)

By December 31, 2021

Access to use the Aladtec staffing system will expire.

What if I need help?

If you are experiencing staffing shortages, please refer to your facility's emergency operation or other COVID response plans.

Below are some additional resources you can use:

- Defining Crisis Staffing Shortage (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/crisis.html>)
- LTC Contingency Staffing Plan (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/ltc/index.html>)

Addressing testing needs

As of June 30, 2021

The nurse triage line, which reported test results to facilities that used the MDH standing order for PCR COVID-19 tests, has been discontinued.

NOTE: The MDH standing order will remain available for PCR testing through September 30, 2021. If facilities need to continue to use the standing order between June 30-September 30, 2021, they first need to contact MDH to obtain a copy of the order and to inform us of their intent to use it. Facilities using the standing order must use the Mayo Clinic laboratory for processing their specimens. Mayo will provide results to each facility's designated point of contact.

What if I need help?

If your facility has been using the MDH standing order, you will need to work with the Mayo Health System laboratory to ensure that they have the appropriate contact information to share results.

By July 15, 2021

Mobile specimen collection teams that provide on-site swabbing services for LTC facilities will no longer be available. Each LTC facility will need to coordinate swabbing efforts using their own trained staff, or collaborate with local provider partners, to collect specimens when needed. Facilities may also contract with Vault Health or other companies for saliva testing services or continue to make use of point-of-care antigen tests (e.g. Abbott BinaxNOW) as appropriate. Facilities must continue to follow all relevant state and federal guidance and requirements related to COVID-19 testing for residents or staff, as well as guidance related to the use of point of care antigen tests.

Facilities currently using the services of an MDH LTC swabbing contractor will be directly notified of this transition. If staff training is needed, LTC facilities should coordinate with their mobile team before the swabbing contracts end.

What if I need help?

Review your emergency preparedness or other COVID response plans to identify whether support options have been previously outlined. Look for opportunities to acquire local support (e.g., provider groups, sister facilities). MDH can no longer provide onsite support for specimen collection. The MDH Public Health Laboratory may be able to provide PCR-based testing in situations where other laboratory arrangements are not available and there is a public health need for prompt test turnaround. If such assistance is needed, please contact the main MDH infectious disease line at 651-201-5414.

Use the following resources for information on antigen testing and acquisition of testing kits:

- [MDH, Information for Providers Requesting Abbott BinaxNOW™ Antigen Tests \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/binaxnow.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/binaxnow.html)
- [MDH, Using Antigen-based Point-of-Care \(POC\) Testing for COVID-19 in Long-term Care Facilities \(pdf\) \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltcantigentest.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltcantigentest.pdf)

By September 30, 2021

The MDH standing order, which allows facilities that do not have a medical director to order COVID-19 PCR tests for staff or residents using the MDH medical director as the ordering provider, will expire.

Facilities using the MDH standing order will be contacted individually to inform them of the scheduled expiration date and advised on alternative options for COVID-19 testing.

What if I need help?

If your facility does not have a medical director, please refer to your organization's emergency operations or other COVID response plans.

By December 31, 2021

The State of Minnesota's contract with the Mayo Health System's laboratory for COVID-19 specimen processing will sunset. While Mayo will continue to offer COVID-19 laboratory testing services to facilities that have made direct arrangements with them, the State's ability to serve as a financial 'backstop' for tests that are not covered by other payers will end.

This timeline may shift or be extended, as MDH continues to hone its overall ongoing testing plan in response to changes in demand.

What if I need help?

Review your emergency preparedness plan to identify whether laboratory options have been previously outlined. Connect with local health care partners (e.g., hospitals, health care coalitions) for additional opportunities or awareness of testing contractors.

Reference the [Serial Testing of Nursing Facility Staff for COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/serialtestfaq.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/serialtestfaq.pdf>).

Addressing vaccination needs

By August 31, 2021

Two of the three SEOC LTC vaccination contracts will sunset and any facilities currently working with these contractors will be directly notified. In addition, assisted living facilities will no longer be asked to complete the SEOC assisted living facility REDCap vaccination report. The REDCap link will be inactivated.

By September 30, 2021

The final SEOC LTC vaccination contract will sunset and any facilities currently partnering with them will be directly notified.

What if I need help?

To find vaccination locations near you:

- Vaccine Finder: <https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/find-vaccine/locations/index.jsp>
- Vaccines.gov: <https://www.vaccines.gov/search/>

Check with local healthcare settings, pharmacies, or public health departments.

Review the Employer Toolkit: <https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/employer-toolkit/index.jsp>

Addressing personal protective equipment needs

By July 31, 2021

The MDH warehouse team will complete the push of PPE products to assisted living facilities that have made a request. All PPE inquiries should be redirected to health.mdh.warehouse@state.mn.us.

What if I need help?

If you are unable to source PPE for your facility, make a request to the state warehouse using the REDCap request form: <https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=LXR9JMRYEJ>.

Review the infection prevention and control resources on the Infection Prevention and Control: COVID-19 (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/infectioncontrol.html>) page of the MDH website. This page includes links to the CDC Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of PPE and the MDH COVID-19 PPE grids.

By September 30, 2021

The REDCap request form for LTC facilities to request PPE from the state warehouse will be inactivated.

What if I need help?

Connect with your Regional Health Care Preparedness Coordinator (RHPC) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/coalitions/rhpc.html>) for assistance identifying potential vendors to purchase PPE.

By December 31, 2021

The email inbox (health.r-hsc@state.mn.us mailbox) for PPE related questions will close.

What if I need help?

Connect with your Regional Health Care Preparedness Coordinator (RHPC) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/coalitions/rhpc.html>) for assistance identifying potential vendors to purchase PPE.

LONG-TERM CARE DEMOBILIZATION PLAN

Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
625 Robert Street North PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.