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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information:

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COVID testing continues to be a topic that generates lots of questions and concerns for residents. The Essex County Health Department would like to provide our community members with some updates regarding the testing landscape in the region, as it has changed quite significantly from the early days of the pandemic.

First, it is important to mention the coronavirus pandemic response role of ECHD. We are here to investigate, isolate, quarantine, and conduct contact tracing activities for COVID-19 exposures in Essex County. We also educate and inform the public about prevention and we provide assistance for our local leaders, partners, businesses, and residents in interpreting state guidelines and mandates. ECHD does not conduct or process COVID tests. We maintain a list of testing locations, available at https://www.co.essex.ny.us/Health/covid-19-information-and-resources/ or residents can search testing locations at https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you.

Beginning July 1st, access to diagnostic testing for COVID-19 was expanded to include all New Yorkers who reside or work within the state, as recommended by a healthcare provider. This means that the previous criteria that may have prevented certain groups from accessing testing no longer applies. However, *testing* and *processing* is prioritized in order to ensure that results are available to protect public health and critical infrastructure. Symptomatic individuals, individuals requiring a test for medical care, contacts of positive cases, healthcare workers or first responders, and employees of essential industries are identified for priority testing.

Wait times for test results may differ depending on the reason for the COVID test, given the prioritization described above. This is not something ECHD has any control over, as it is directly related to the volume of tests being processed and the number and capacity of laboratories conducting COVID testing.

The cost to receive a COVID test may also vary depending on the ordering provider/facility and whether the test is deemed medically necessary. If you go to a test site run by New York State, there is never any charge for your test. Call the NYS COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-364-3065 to make an appointment at a New York State run testing site. If you go to a test site operated by local governments, private companies including pharmacies and medical practices or not-for-profit organizations, you are advised to check with the testing site and your insurer in advance of being tested to confirm you will not be responsible for any fees associated with your test. ECHD always recommends starting with your primary care provider if you are trying to access testing.

The Essex County Health Department will continue to work with our local healthcare providers to ensure that our residents are able to access COVID testing, as needed, and that they have the most accurate and up-to-date information. For more details about our COVID-19 response, please refer to our website: www.co.essex.ny.us/Health or Facebook page: www.facebook.com/EssexCountyPublicHealth.

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