



DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH- Linda Beers, MPH

November 2, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Essex County Health Department Announces Additional Rapid Testing Capacity

Through collaboration with our health care partners at Hudson Headwaters Health Network, UVMHN-Elizabethtown Community Hospital and Adirondack Health-Adirondack Medical Center, the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) is pleased to announce that receipt of COVID-19 testing equipment and supplies to increase rapid testing capacity in the county.

The health department received three COVID-19 Molecular test machines with enough materials to perform over 1,000 tests. The department also received 800 COVID-19 Antigen cards, which do not require a test machine to process a result. This effort is part of a larger New York State Department of Health initiative to deploy rapid testing to counties throughout the state.

“We know that accessing rapid COVID-19 tests in Essex County has been challenging,” acknowledged Linda Beers, Director of Public Health at ECHD. “We’re excited to work with our health care providers to improve the availability of rapid testing, which will help us target specific populations that have the most need,” Beers continued.

“NYSDOH asked that counties develop a plan to demonstrate how these supplies will be utilized, prioritizing the control of new outbreaks or clusters, conducting surveillance testing, and assisting schools in yellow zones, with consideration of vulnerable, at-risk populations”, explained Andrea Whitmarsh, Public Information Officer at ECHD. “We were able to provide a plan to the state and we’re now in the process of ironing out the details with our partners and getting staff trained to use these materials”.

Offering rapid testing requires that staff are trained to perform sample collection (swabbing), operation of the machines, and/or use of the cards - and all of the same requirements for documenting and reporting results apply. “We also had to update our laboratory license to include this testing as part of our approved services, so there is work involved before we can begin to roll this out to the community,” Beers noted. “But, we’re working quickly to make it happen in time for peak cold and flu season – when we feel it will be most needed – and our Medical Director, Dr. Michael J. Celotti has been instrumental in supporting this process”.

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