

# SENTINEL SURVEILLANCE FOR INFLUENZA (THE FLU) - HOW TO GET STARTED

## **I'm interested in participating in Sentinel Surveillance. How do I get started?**

Submit your contact information to [flu@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:flu@vdh.virginia.gov) and put "Sentinel Surveillance Provider Interest" in the subject line of your email. Once your information is received, The Respiratory Disease Team (RDT) will set up a virtual meeting to discuss participation and review the program. Once you and your staff decide to move forward, RDT staff will get you on boarded and oriented to the program. The RDT at VDH will pass your contact information along to the public health lab- Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) so they can mail the specimen collection kits to your facility.

## **What time of the year should I start collecting specimens?**

For the 2022-23 flu season, specimens should be collected starting October 2, 2022 and continue through May 20, 2023.

## **What does specimen collection entail?**

Patients who meet the ILI criteria should have a specimen collected for testing. For public health surveillance, ILI consists of a fever of 100°F or more with a sore throat and/or a cough. Specimens can be collected from anyone who meets the ILI criteria, regardless of whether or not they are diagnosed with influenza.

DCLS provides detailed instructions for specimen collection, and the instructions documents will be provided with the specimen collection kits. Specimens that are collected and packed at your facility and are ready to be shipped to DCLS, will be picked up via DCLS courier services.

## **How many specimens should I collect?**

In order to have confidence that we could identify viruses that are either novel or resistant to antivirals, we hope to receive approximately 175 specimens per week across the state during the 2022-23 flu season. The specific amount of specimens per provider is contingent upon the total number of participating providers. It is estimated that each provider submits approximately 10-15 specimens per week.

## **When should I be collecting specimens?**

We ask that you collect specimens at the beginning of the week so that they can be mailed out by Wednesday. This allows for transit time and testing before the end of the week. Please keep in mind that DCLS should receive the specimens within 72 hours of collection. In your 72 hour time frame, please ensure to consider travel time. You can store them in a fridge until they are shipped. Please **DO NOT ship** any specimens on Friday or over the weekend, as specimens cannot be received by DCLS over the weekend.

## **How can I see the results?**

DCLS We will share a weekly summary of the test results with you and that will help you understand how the flu season is unfolding in your area. Please note, results are for surveillance purposes and not for diagnosis.

## **If you have other questions, please contact**

**Our flu email inbox at [flu@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:flu@vdh.virginia.gov)**

**Thank you!**

