



DATE:	12/28/2020
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	UPDATE: Providing demographic variables as part of laboratory submission forms
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	n/a
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING, AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE
LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

- Laboratory submission forms and patient test results with missing key demographic variables including patient date of birth, phone number, address, race, and ethnicity continue to present challenges for public health staff
- These variables are essential for a complete and timely public health response to patients with COVID-19 and other reportable diseases
- Providers are reminded that patient date of birth, address, telephone number, race, and ethnicity data fields should be included on all laboratory submission forms
- Clinical laboratories are mandated to report the name, age, address, telephone number, and other information requested by the Department regarding the person from whom the specimen was obtained. See (PA Code, Title 28, Chapter 27: § 27.22 “Reporting of cases by clinical laboratories”)
- Laboratories are unable to report this information unless they receive it with submitted specimens

This replaces PA HAN 495. The Pennsylvania Department of Health (Department) continues to identify a large number of laboratory test results submitted without key variables including patient date of birth, address, and telephone number. These demographic fields are essential for correct jurisdiction assignment and for the timely initiation of case investigations, particularly related to COVID-19 exposures.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, race data and ethnicity data are unknown for 41% and 69% of Pennsylvania COVID-19 cases, respectively. Additionally, among almost 5 million COVID-related reports submitted by labs and providers to PA-NEDSS in the past 90 days, 42%

were missing patient race, and 76% were missing ethnicity information. This information is necessary to understand health disparities across the Commonwealth and to guide resource needs and allocation.

Providers should always include patient name, date of birth, address, telephone number, and race and ethnicity information when completing the laboratory submission/requisition form for patients. If this information is not included on the laboratory submission/requisition form, the ordering facility should enter these demographic elements into PA-NEDSS as mandated under PA Code, Title 28, Chapter 27.

Clinical laboratories are required to report the name, age, address, and telephone number from whom the specimen was obtained under PA Code, Title 28, Chapter 27: § 27.22 “Reporting of cases by clinical laboratories.” ([28 Pa. Code § 27.22. Reporting of cases by clinical laboratories. \(pacodeandbulletin.gov\)](http://pacodeandbulletin.gov)). However, they are unable to do this if they do not receive the information from the providers submitting specimens.

In addition, clinical laboratories reporting via ELR should report race data in PID10 and ethnicity data in PID-22 as per Health Level Seven (HL7) version 2.5.1 guidelines. Clinical laboratories using manual entry into PA-NEDSS should include this information in the appropriate short form sections. Providers performing point of care tests are reminded to follow reporting guidance outlined in [PA HAN 534](#).

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of December 28, 2020 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.
