



January 9, 2023

**TO: Submitters of specimens to the Wadsworth Center Pediatric HIV Testing Service**

**FROM: Bloodborne Viruses Laboratory, Wadsworth Center**

The Wadsworth Center's Bloodborne Viruses Laboratory, in coordination with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Perinatal HIV Prevention Program (PHPP), offers testing through the Pediatric HIV Testing Service to diagnose or exclude HIV infection in infants who are born to people living with HIV. This letter is to inform submitters of changes we are making to improve the Pediatric HIV Testing Service.

### **Why are we making these changes?**

Based on updated [clinical guidelines](#), infants at highest risk of perinatal HIV transmission should be treated with 'presumptive HIV therapy', which consists of three antiretroviral (ARV) drugs administered within 6 hours of birth. Triple drug therapy has the potential to suppress the amount of HIV RNA in the blood to very low levels, making it difficult to detect HIV in infected infants while they are being treated. We are making changes to the Pediatric HIV Testing Service to enhance our ability to detect small amounts of HIV RNA in all pediatric samples submitted to our laboratory.

### **What specific changes are we making?**

We are requiring samples be collected and shipped in a manner that better preserves HIV RNA and we are testing a larger sample volume when available. Together, these changes will allow us to achieve optimal sensitivity of the HIV-1 RNA test. In addition, for infants at greatest risk for perinatal HIV infection, we are requesting an additional sample be collected at 8-12 weeks of age (2-6 weeks after cessation of ARV treatment) based on [NYS Recommendations](#). Finally, we are encouraging all submitters to use our electronic system for requesting tests and retrieving test results to improve the efficiency and security of these operations.

### **What would we like our submitters to do?**

- Providers are encouraged to alert the NYSDOH PHPP of known infants at high risk for perinatal HIV infection. Providers are requested to email [phpp@health.ny.gov](mailto:phpp@health.ny.gov) with provider contact information ONLY. No patient identifiers should be included.
- Contact the Wadsworth Center order desk at (518) 474-4175 to request a reconfigured Pediatric HIV Collection Kit, which includes updated collection instructions, blood collection tube, insulated shipper, cold packs, and a pre-paid FedEx shipping label.
- Follow our [updated collection instructions](#) and collect a minimum of 2mL of blood from infants. A full tube (4 mL) is preferred to allow for repeat testing, if needed. Separate plasma/serum from

blood cells within 6 hours of collection and ship plasma/serum on frozen cold packs to better preserve viral RNA within the sample.

- For high-risk infants, collect blood at 8-12 weeks (in addition to the collections within 48 hours of birth, 2 weeks, 4-6 weeks, and 4-6 months of age).
- Request testing and retrieve electronic results via the [CLIMS application on the Health Commerce System](#) to ensure clear submission of required information to Wadsworth Center, which in turn minimizes delays in testing and guarantees results are available to the submitter immediately upon release.
- Testing can also be requested using the new fillable [Infectious Disease Requisition Form \(DOH-4463\)](#). Be sure to complete the section of the form that is required for HIV testing of infants.

We are pleased to offer the following virtual trainings to review pediatric HIV testing updates and to assist submitters with using the CLIMS application on the Health Commerce System.

- Tuesday (1/17/2023) 1:00-2:00 PM
- Thursday (1/19/2023) 10:00-11:00 AM
- Monday (1/23/2023) 3:00-4:00 PM
- Wednesday (1/25/2023) 9:00-10:00 AM

Please indicate your interest in attending a training by completing [this form](#). While space is limited, additional trainings can be scheduled if needed.

Information about pediatric HIV testing can be found at

<https://www.wadsworth.org/programs/id/bloodborne-viruses/clinical-testing/pediatric-hiv>

The second page of the updated Infectious Disease Requisition Form (DOH-4663) includes instructions for completing the form – see <https://www.wadsworth.org/programs/id/idr>.

CLIMS resources, including user guides, training resources, and frequently asked questions are available at <https://www.wadsworth.org/electronic-test-request-reporting-new>.

Please email [outreachsupport@health.ny.gov](mailto:outreachsupport@health.ny.gov) or call 518-474-4177 if you have questions about using the CLIMS application on the Health Commerce System.

Please email [bbvlab@health.ny.gov](mailto:bbvlab@health.ny.gov) or call 518-474-2163 if you have questions about changes to pediatric HIV testing.

Sincerely,



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Linda Styer, Ph.D.  
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